

Executive Board and Department Rep Meeting – September 29, 2021

Present

Board Members: Eve Weinbaum, Marc Liberatore, Asha Nadkarni, Caleb Rounds, Christine Turner, Clare Hammonds, Dean Robinson, Jeanne Brunner, Jen Adams, John Staudenmayer, Kevin Young, Maciej Cieselski, Michael Ash, Priyanka Srivastava, Sandy Litchfield, Sheila Pennell, Sigrid Schmalzer, Tristram Seidler

Reps: Louise Antony, Neal Katz, Tom Roeper, Christine Hatch, Colleen Kuusinen, Ezra Markowitz, Hadi Jorati, Jen Sandler, Karen Kurczynski, Laura Attanasio, Laura Ciolkowski, Leonora Thomas, Luis Martenes, Om Parkesh Dhanker, Pablo Visconti, Shelly Peyton, Toussaint Losier, Yi Feng, Devin Day

Staff: Lori Reardon, Mickey Gallagher, Emily Steelhammer

Guest: Steve Brewer

Health and Safety updates

- General sense is that people are happy to be back on campus, but a lot of questions remain.
- Numbers are looking better. Of the positive cases 34 were on campus, 57 off campus, 9 faculty/staff. The positivity rate is 1.27%
- We are asking for the dashboard to be updated daily and for more information about cases. We've been told that would happen but it hasn't yet.
- We put in a legal request for information – air testing in buildings, as opposed to specifications of HVAC systems. There is a meeting coming up on Friday with EH&S and facilities to talk about those requests.
- We are also working with staff unions on info requests.
- There is no mandatory testing, though GEO and other unions want this.
- Adaptive testing started last week – they are doing mandatory testing for specific areas, such as for off-campus housing. They wouldn't be surprised to see an increase in numbers this week because of the adaptive testing.
- The administration might ask for mandatory testing of faculty and staff.
- Instructions to faculty about students testing positive in the class (right now we can't tell the class if there have been positive cases). Chancellor said that they would reconsider: we will ask Michael Eagan this afternoon.
- At the Faculty Senate no one raised concerns about health and safety so the administration isn't hearing this. So – how is it going?

Q and A

- More test kits? There was a problem with people taking too many. We will ask again about getting more sites where folks can pick up kits.

- Masks: KN95s have been distributed to the departments
 - Mask kiosks are often empty.
 - Clear masks – only 2 per faculty who need them?
- Absences are becoming a huge problem in classes.
- Mixed messages – we are supposed to be masking but then there are these dinners and receptions, etc. We agree that those meetings are a cause for concern
- Ventilation: If people are concerned they should email askehs@umass.edu (cc: MSP) and request that EH&S come and test the air in the classroom. If there are problems they can get a HEPA filter for the classroom.
- We have asked that the wastewater information be put on the dashboard.
- How much spread is happening in academic buildings? Vast majority of folks who have tested positive have been at indoor parties, bars, etc. Based on that EH&S feel confident that that is where the spread is. The adaptive testing is supposed to help stop the spread.
- We are asking for more granular information to be put on the dashboard. If you want this PLEASE email the administration (askehs@umass.edu, and cc: MSP) to ask for this information!
- We need to get information out about the student symptom checklist; students are coming to class sick. There are colds and strep going around, but given that delta is MORE contagious than these other things shouldn't students stay home?
- Students aren't self-reporting because there are disincentives for students to report.
- People aren't wearing masks properly. Any suggestions about how to deal with this?
- What to do about students who have missed the majority of classes so far?
 - Talking to Carol Barr later and will relay some of this information to her.
 - If you have recordings of lectures you can share them and that might solve the problem.
 - We have been reminding faculty that if students are sick you don't have the obligation to run a multimodal class, but the people at IDEAS and CTL have been sending out suggestions for how to make your courses multi-modal and this is unreasonable. All you need to do is accommodate the same way you would do in before times.
 - We can't require students to prove that they are sick.

Bargaining

- We've presented all of our proposals.
- The administration hasn't had any responses to anything, but we are now in the phase where we will start talking about trade-offs and hopefully make progress.
- Five major categories:

- Climate Justice (more buses, more flexible parking, more days off, fixing sick buildings/retrofitting). Forum on 10/14 on Climate Justice. Unions are sending a message to the Chancellor saying that we all have proposals at the table and we'd love to announce that we made some progress on these issues. Some of the specifics (like parking) are mandatory subjects of bargaining. But other proposals fall under the umbrella of bargaining for the common good so we'll need other ways to push the administration on that
- Race and gender equity pay equity (pathway hires equity in workload, role for MSP in hiring and exit interviews). Some of these don't cost much and we hope we can make progress.
- NTT issues (teaching tenure track, and other equity proposals) They have bad proposals on the table about this and we will push back on them!
- Online Education – We put forth proposals that protect faculty (workload, intellectual property, etc). We are waiting for their proposals.
- Economics: All of the other unions got the governor's parameters. Only MSP has gotten percentages withheld for merit pools so we are beginning to bargain around that and other economic issues.
- Joint proposals: childcare, climate change,
- Most of the unions are close to settling. Not sure why we're being treated differently except that we do have more ambitious proposals.
- Brandman University – online UMass education but separate from UMass Amherst. But if it becomes a money suck we should keep our eyes on that.

Calendar Change

- The administration wants to push the start date of the fall semester to the Monday before Labor Day. Period of Responsibility would begin on 8/25. It has already gone to the calendar subcommittee of the faculty senate. If it goes through they are asserting that this change will just happen.
- This is concerning because the calendar change should be subject to bargaining insofar as it impacts the period of non-responsibility.
- Reason for this change is to have more (3) January sessions, which have been popular and make money for the University.
- This will negatively impact parents because schools and camps are not generally running in the last week of August
- What does this do to the 5 College schedule?
- What about off-campus students? Do they have to rent for all of August
 - We will talk to Carol Barr about this this afternoon in the Eagan meeting
- This is another kick in the teeth to parents who have already shouldered heavy burdens through the pandemic
- Seems like the administration is end-running MSP though going through the Senate – should we stack the faculty senate? We do have a number of strong

- MSP people on the senate. The thing is that the calendar is the one thing they can do that we really care about and it's hard to outvote them. But we might need to organize the MSP Senators around this. BUT we should keep labor specific issues in the MSP – not try to work them out by stacking the Senate.
- There is already the erosion of the period of non-responsibility because of the preview week moodle requirement (we have a pending grievance about this).
 - What about people who get summer salary through grants? We will ask about this.
 - What about students who work over the summer?
 - Period of Responsibility: parts of the job that are directly dictated by the University (i.e. teaching our classes, committee work). We still all work over the summer (doing our research, etc.) but the University isn't going to ding you for not doing it.
 - Can't push the spring semester later because again they want to do more summer sessions.

Board and Rep responsibilities

- People on the board and department reps – eyes and ears and activists.
- We do outreach to new members, do updates, go to department meetings.
- Outreach – another way of connecting with people, something to drop into conversations, remembering to ask colleagues who you might be connecting with in other ways
- People come to department reps with questions and sometimes just engaging with them and answering questions helps them to come around to learning how much the union does for them.
- Department signups
 - Only 4 areas on campus where we don't have representation.
 - Please sign up if you can!
- Take a look at the sheet and if you've done a visit please report that.

Save the Date

- New Member welcome event tomorrow (9/30). At Groff Park at 4. Food, drink, and fun. Kids and families welcome!