

Bargaining Update

*From 11/28/2016 All Unit Email

Dear colleagues,

The MSP and the administration have now met three times to negotiate our new contract that will cover 2017-2020, and we wanted to share some of the highlights with you.

1. The MSP proposed ground rules, including:
 - We are negotiating “Amherst-only” contract language on our campus, and we will coordinate with our sister chapter at UMass Boston around issues of salaries and health and welfare, and to discuss any system-wide proposals, as always. We remain part of a statewide coalition of unions negotiating around tuition and fee benefits for partners and dependents, which is independent of the MSP’s local negotiations.
 - We hope to expedite negotiations in order to resolve the economic issues before the legislature finalizes the state budget, to avoid a supplemental budget and possible fights about retroactive pay. Our ground rules stated that the union is prepared to negotiate now, and in the event we do not reach an agreement by the end of 2016, we would revert to the terms of the current contract for another three years, including the economic package. (The administration has not agreed.)
2. We made several proposals related to faculty teaching in Continuing and Professional Education (CPE), and/or distance learning (DL) courses. Our demands include:
 - Faculty or librarians who develop a DL or CPE course should retain the “right of first refusal” to teach that course in the future. The intellectual property rights remain with the course developer.
 - Base pay rates for CPE courses should mirror minimum salaries for on-campus courses. It is essential that we have parity between the two systems as more of our departments and programs blend CPE and on-campus courses.
3. Non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty are a growing group of MSP members, and we want to protect their rights to shared governance and healthy working conditions, including:
 - Periodic professional improvement leave. We have asked for the same policy that professional staff have had for many years on this campus: the ability to request paid leave to pursue educational or research opportunities, after six years of service at UMass.
 - All full-time NTT appointments should recognize the time necessary for departmental and university service when determining workload. All full-time faculty should be able to advise students, participate in faculty meetings, and serve on committees.
 - Making processes more fair. For example, some NTT faculty receive notices of termination on the same day they are hired. And some NTT faculty are regularly

required to work during their period of non-responsibility (summers and vacations), which should be fairly compensated as regular salary.

4. Librarians. We presented quite a few changes to the language in the article specific to librarians, including changes to the annual review form and process.

Administration proposals:

1. **Sick leave caps.** The administration is proposing to bring back a cap on sick time that faculty can earn. In addition, at our most recent bargaining session, the administration stated its opinion that the current Sick Leave Bank is “not a good fit for faculty.” They are hiring a consulting firm to study the current policy and to propose alternatives. The MSP believes that the Sick Leave Bank has been extraordinarily successful for many years, providing job security for faculty and librarians who are dealing with severe health crises.

2. **Fitness for duty.** Once again, the administration wants to impose a “fitness for duty” test. This would allow the administration to single out a faculty member or librarian for any reason (age, health concerns, student complaints, collegial disputes, etc.) and require them to submit to an examination by the administration’s chosen physician or psychiatrist to decide whether they are “fit for duty.” On that doctor’s recommendation, the faculty or librarian could then be placed on unpaid “compulsory medical leave.” The MSP stated our strong opposition to this proposal, which we believe violates our members’ civil rights.

Both the MSP and the administration will be presenting new proposals in the coming weeks, and we will continue to discuss the above issues as well. We welcome your feedback on any of these issues. Our union bargaining team consists of five individuals who have volunteered their time to fight for a good contract, as well as our expert staff members:

Steven Brewer, Biology
David Gross, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Kathleen Lugosch, Architecture
Christine Turner, Libraries
Eve Weinbaum, Labor Studies and Sociology
Mickey Gallagher, MTA staff
Lori Reardon, MSP staff

MSP staff member Emily Steelhammer is coordinating the organizing effort. Bargaining team members are working closely with MSP bargaining support committees to formulate proposals and counter-proposals, prioritize our demands, and to think about where we have leverage to get what our members want. We would love to have your help! Please get in touch if you have expertise and/or energy to lend. We will need everyone’s participation to win the contract our members deserve.

In solidarity,
Eve