

# 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

*a*s I write this column the MSP and other campus unions have just won an important victory. Once again, we showed that by standing together and making our voices heard we can achieve our goals. The story is instructive as we think about MSP's plans for the coming year.

In June 2018 MSP members ratified an excellent collective bargaining agreement that included raises back through the 2017-2018 academic year. You might think that meant we would get the raises that we were owed, going back to July 2017. But this is Massachusetts, so it is not that easy. The ratified contract went to the UMass President's Office in Boston to be approved. Then it had to be transmitted from the President's Office to the Governor's Office, because only the Governor can submit the contract to the legislature. Once the legislature got the contract, it had to create a supplemental budget to authorize the funding, since the FY19 Massachusetts budget had already been passed in the spring of 2018. The House Ways and Means Committee had to approve the contract followed by approval by the full House and Senate on Beacon Hill. After that, the contract had to go back to the Governor, who could either sign it or veto it. Vetoing it would have started the process all over again.

Fortunately, in mid-October the Governor signed the bill and our contract was funded along with those of the other UMass unions across the UMass system. We were promised then that faculty and librarians would get our raises soon. Suddenly, at the end of November, we heard that the

raises were not coming this semester. Why? The UMass President's Office said that the Governor's Office had not provided enough funds. The legislature and Governor disagreed, saying that they had funded exactly what the President's Office requested. The Amherst administration said the President's Office would not allow our raises to be paid; the President's Office said the campuses did not want to pay. Everyone pointed fingers at someone else.



*by standing together and  
making our voices heard we  
can achieve our goals*

We have seen this game before – each player keeps their moves secret, guessing what the others will do, always holding out for a better deal for themselves. In the case of the UMass administration, they want more funding and they try to force the unions to use their leverage to get more funding for UMass. Of course the unions want more funding for UMass as public higher education is sorely under-funded in Massachusetts. But the way to get everyone on the same page is to work together, not to hold ransom a debt owed in order to coerce the unions to work for better funding.

In the past we have waited to see who would blink first. This time we did not wait and see – we took action. The MSP board discussed our options the morning after we first heard that our raises were being held hostage: filing legal charges, boycotting administrative committees, withholding grades, civil disobedience. We started right then to organize all the UMass unions for a call-in at 2 PM the next day in order to flood the President's Office phone lines and literally make our voices heard. At the same time, we started to organize for the Board of Trustees December meeting, planning to disrupt it if

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## SAVE the DATE

MSP General Assembly  
December 11, 2018, noon-2 PM,  
Amherst Room, Campus Center

UMass Trustees Meeting  
December 13, 2018, 10 AM  
Old Chapel

All-Union Meeting  
January 30, 2019, noon  
Campus Center

MSP Grant Applications  
Due March 30, 2019

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

## Know Your Contract

### Policies on Sexual Harassment and Assault

By Mickey Gallagher, MTA Staff, and Eve Weinbaum, MSP President

For several years, the MSP has had serious concerns about the university's policy and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating complaints of sexual harassment or assault. Inefficiencies in the process have led to long investigative delays, insufficient notice of charges, unclear standards for responding to complaints, and ambiguous decisions with unclear resolutions. The MSP has represented both complainants and respondents, and almost everyone has been dissatisfied with the process.

Last year, the UMass Amherst administration attempted to designate all faculty and librarians as "responsible employees" under Title IX. This legal category would make faculty and librarians responsible for mandatory reporting of any incidents of potential sexual harassment, regardless of the context or the desire of the student/complainant to file such a complaint. In other settings, this policy has been found to have a chilling effect on the willingness of students and staff to come forward with complaints because they know that anything they tell a staff or faculty member will be reported to the central administration and trigger an investigation. The MSP believes that it is crucial that students be able to talk with faculty members in confidence, even before they are ready to file a formal complaint. Therefore, we have proposed that only those individuals who have direct responsibility for taking action on complaints should be designated as "responsible employees" under federal law.

In our recently ratified collective bargaining agreement, the MSP bargaining team was successful in negotiating Appendix H that can be found in the [contract](#) (see the MSP website for the full text of the contract), which states that most faculty and librarians are not mandatory reporters, but rather that everyone is responsible for referring students to appropriate resources if they have any concerns and helping students file formal reports when they are ready. In addition, we created a labor/management committee to address the inefficiencies we have identified by developing a new Sexual Harassment/Assault policy and procedure. This committee has already engaged in developing a revised policy and expects to make recommendations to the

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### What happened to our merit pay increases?

By Dave Gross, MSP Treasurer

Do you wonder how salary raise and merit increase rates are negotiated between the MSP bargaining team and the administration? This article may give you some insight into the byzantine and unreasonable process.

This past bargaining session we went from a zero pay increase to 2% across the board for each of the three years of the contract. This contract's negotiations were different than those in the past. The usual process is that MSP, and all other higher ed unions, are offered the same deal that all other state unions have been offered. The percent raises that we are usually offered are worked out between the governor's office and the state's largest unions, AFCSME. That is, there is no actual bargaining over the total raise dollars for the contract.

What happened for our last contract was a change. The UMass President's office initially refused to honor the statewide agreement and said they would offer no raises. The MSP bargaining team, along with other UMass union bargaining teams, flatly refused such a deal citing both precedent and a clear violation of the Governor's intentions. For many months the President's office refused to provide any financial offers. The MSP bargaining team brought forth our own proposal that would have covered cost of living increases as well as increases in medical expenses plus merit increases. The administration rejected our offer.

After more than two years of bargaining, the President's office gave us the same offer that other state worker unions had gotten: 2% per year for each of the three years of the contract. The administration bargaining team wanted us to split that 2% half-and-half as across-the-board and merit. We countered that the full 2% must be across-the-board since the current cost of living in the Northeast was at 2.3% and we have a general principle that as much of the cost of living increase must be met across-the-board before we add merit to raises. The MSP bargaining team also demanded that the full raises be paid retroactively no matter how long it took to sign the contract. As you know by now, we do have a 2% raise across-the-board for three years and all monies due us will be paid retroactively. As of this writing, we have just won a major victory in getting the administration to pay our raises finally (see the President's Desk for more on this).

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## All In Canvassing: Marc Liberatore

Members of the MSP Executive Board have been out canvassing this semester. You may have seen them out in pairs or as individuals, and you may have been visited by them. The purpose of this canvassing is to bring the MSP to individuals in departments, particularly those individuals who were agency fee payers before the Janus decision by the Supreme Court ended agency fees for public sector unions like the MSP. One of the most active canvassers is Marc Liberatore who is an MSP Executive Board member and Lecturer in the College of Information and Computer Sciences. The Chronicle talked with Marc in the middle of canvassing season. Here is his story.

**Chronicle:** Tell me about your path to UMass.

**Marc L.:** Oh man, I've been here forever. I was an undergrad here. I arrived in 1996 and, after bouncing around between majors for a while, I settled into computer science. I did my PhD here partly due to inertia and partly because the offer was good and there were new faculty that I was excited to work with. After my PhD I became a faculty member at Wesleyan for about a year which was definitely a different place than here, and a good place to be a faculty member. In early 2009 my former adviser called me to ask if I would come back to work on a big grant project. So I found myself back here for eight years as a research scientist. I had done a little ad hoc teaching here and there and that led me to apply for a lecturer position in the department. That was in 2016 and so here I am.

**C:** What is your workday like here at UMass?

**ML:** The Computer Science Department has this problem – we are experiencing our second recent round of explosive growth in the undergraduate population. That's partly because of student demand and partly because the



Marc Liberatore in front of one of his classes.

Provost's Office came out and said a couple of years ago "We're doubling the size of your undergraduate program in the next five years." We're in the midst of that, doubling from about 1000 to about 2000 majors. That has put huge demands on the teaching staff, especially at the introductory course levels. Much of that extra teaching burden has fallen to the lecturers in the department. My offer letter said something like a three/three load, but the three we get now are not usually three small courses, they're three gigantic ones. My "small" upper-level class last semester had ninety people in it.

I was the main author of a proposal for and I am a co-PI of a large NSF training grant that supports students. About twenty percent of my salary is paid by the grant and I'm the primary person who deals with the students. Separately, I advise 220 CS majors a semester. That's a full-time job right there. Usually about 10% or 15% of the students have trouble. With 20 advisees that's two people, but when you have 200 it's 20 people. This happens in classes too, especially in large undergraduate classes. Faculty who don't teach those size classes don't realize how much more needy those students can be, and just scale of the support effort that is necessary. That's a double whammy of bigger classes and more problems at the lower levels.

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## Fund our Future

By Max Page, MTA Vice-President and MSP member

We are one of the richest states in the nation. We have a reputation for having the country's finest public education system.

And yet, as we all well know, we have woefully underfunded public higher education for decades. We are near the bottom of states in terms of how much we spend on public higher education per capita. And we have gotten to that place with a 32% drop in per student spending

over the past 15 years. The results – and they are far more dire in our community colleges – are increased use (and abuse) of adjunct faculty members, self-funded building and maintenance, and skyrocketing tuition and fees.

The MTA and its education advocacy allies are launching a campaign to "Fund Our Future." The goal is to secure over \$1 billion for public education, k-12, and \$500

million for public higher education, so that we can return to the 2001 per-student funding level, and allow us to reinvest in full-time faculty, provide better pay for our adjunct members, and stop the ever-rising tuition and fees. With the help of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, we have estimated that UMass Amherst would see a \$116 million increase in its yearly operating budget – all if we simply returned

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(President's Desk, continued)

necessary. The media got wind of our plans, and called the unions as well as the Chancellor and President, talking with classified staff who earn less than \$15/hour and were expecting their retroactive pay in order to pay bills and buy holiday gifts for their families. Everyone wanted answers.

By the end of the day that we flooded the President's Office with phone calls, we got the good news: the Chancellor and President had decided to pay the retroactive pay and raises. Victory!

How can we prevent this from happening again? There are two answers, and both involve our advocacy and organizing. First, the MTA has proposed legislation that would simplify our funding process to something similar to what other states do: the employer negotiates the contract, the legislature funds it, and the Governor signs it. Wouldn't that be nice? Second, this winter we are launching the Fund Our Future campaign, to win a significant increase in state funding for public higher education. Plan to join us at the statehouse as we lobby and advocate for the excellent and accessible university our students deserve. ■



The MSP Officers, with apologies to Sir Winston Churchill, declare VICTORY!



Remember those halcyon days of August? Rudbeckias blooming by the Campus Pond.

This year everyone in the  
MSP is saying

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## THE MSP PUZZLE

Last issue's contest was to find the number of times that Max appeared in the issue. The judge counted 20: 11 times with Max in the text, two pictures of the man himself, and a picture with 7 appearances of "Max". Laura H. was the first reader to submit the correct answer.

And now for this issue's challenge. Un-jumble the words above on the right. The circled letters then can be arranged to solve the phrase at the left. The first reader to submit the correct un-jumbled words and the phrase by Feb. 14, 2019 will win a retail meal dining coupon. Send your entry to MSPpuzzle@gmail.com. Open to MSP members. Decision of the judge is final. You can't win unless you enter!

## Report from the Teach-In on Anti-Semitism and Racism

By Eve Weinbaum, MSP President

On November 6, with the whole country reeling from the massacre of eleven Jews in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, faculty members organized a panel and discussion on the history, politics, and psychology of anti-Semitism. The teach-in was entitled "Hate Before and After Pittsburgh: Anti-Semitism, Racism, and White Nationalism in Contemporary America," and was sponsored by the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies and the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies (IHGMS), in conjunction with the Office of Equity and Inclusion.

Faculty speakers included Professors David Mednicoff, Susan Shapiro, Alon Confino, Stephanie Shonekan, Jonathan Skolnick, and Linda Tropp. The speakers focused on the specificity of anti-Semitism, but also put the Pittsburgh event into the context of violent

white supremacy that has found an audience in the U.S. in recent years. They discussed hate speech and the relationship between words and violence, and the role of political leaders in legitimizing racist, sexist, and nationalist ideas and violent acts. The speakers connected anti-Semitism with other forms of racism past and present, including lynching of Black people in the U.S., new forms of Nazism, anti-Muslim violence, and misogyny and racism that have led to violence before and after the Pittsburgh shooting.

Students, faculty, and staff filled the Bernie Dallas Room and participated in the discussion. After Associate Chancellor Anna Branch's closing remarks, the teach-in concluded with a reading of the names of those killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue, and the Mourner's Kaddish, the Jewish prayer of consolation. ■



Participants at the November 6 Teach-In on Anti-Semitism and Racism.

## A Teach-In for a Teach-able Moment

By Toussaint Losier, Department of Afro-American Studies

On Tuesday, October 2nd, the W. E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies and the W. E. B. Du Bois Center held a teach-in following several incidents of racism and racial profiling targeting undergraduate students and staff members on campus. Titled "The Problem of the Color Line," a reference to W. E. B. Du Bois iconic quote about the global sweep of white supremacy, the event drew an audience of some two hundred people and featured a panel of Afroam faculty and graduate students that featured a description of panelists' scholarly research and its contribution to a critical examination of institutional racism.

To open the event, Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy offered brief remarks on the importance of the teach-in on addressing issues of campus climate, complementing both its organizers as well as those in the audience for demonstrating a staunch refusal to be divided by recent events. These incidents of hate included an anonymous caller's depiction of a 14-year university employee as an "agitated Black male" and then the discovery of a racist message, "hang Melville n\*\*\*\*\*" on a bathroom mirror. Occurring in quick

succession, and despite the well-publicized "Hate Has No Home at UMass" initiative, these incidents shocked many on campus and prompted first students, and then faculty to take action.

The idea for the teach-in came at the prompting of Lana Dever, an undergraduate major in the Afro-American studies department, who wrote an open letter to department faculty about the need to show "that we are here and we will not tolerate being marginalized and criminalized." Stephanie Shonekan, the department's newly hired chair, took up Dever's charge and joined with Whitney Battle-Baptiste, head of the Du Bois Center, to organize the teach-in within less than two weeks. Prior to arriving at UMass, Professor Shonekan had served as the chair of the Black Studies department at the University of Missouri. There, she had worked closely with campus activists who carried out a series of protests to address incidents of racism during the 2015-16 academic year.

Following welcomes by Shonekan and Battle-Baptiste, the teach-in began with Dever alongside several professors and graduate

(continued on p.7)

(Marc Liberatore interview, continued)

*C: So do you have previous union experience?*

**ML:** I was a grad student here and they are unionized. I come from a family of Italian plumbers and several of my uncles were active in their unions.

*C: You're considered to be a fairly active MSP member. Tell me about some of the things you've done for MSP in the past year.*

**ML:** I'm a member of the Executive Board. I like to joke that I come for the coffee and doughnuts. I do departmental meeting updates where I go out and talk with faculty members who may or may not be members of the union. So far I have found that to be a great experience. It's fun to go and chat with people. The reception has usually been fairly positive. The people I have met come and talk to me afterward about concerns big and small, and that's very rewarding.

I also do some door-knocking to talk to new unit members who aren't yet MSP members and to unit members who used to pay the agency fee but haven't yet signed up to be full-fledged members. This canvassing is generally pretty good. You go and talk to people and sometimes they're excited to talk with you and sometimes they're not and sometimes they have a long, rambling story. You can learn some interesting things about their views of the union or the university. Another of the things that's nice about this, both the door knocking and being on the board, is that you get a chance to talk with other faculty outside of your own area. I was talking with a professor of English and he basically has a different job than I do and that is interesting to hear because in some ways that's true and in some ways that's not true, but the one common factor is that we are all faculty here at the University.

*C: Well that's a lot of effort if you think of what the typical member does.*

**ML:** I think that if you work in a union job it is important to do the things that help to support the best aspects of the union in order that they persist. Unions are forces for progressive politics, but that's not why I care about them. I do care about progressive politics and I do think that the work the Union does in that arena is important. What matters more to me is the local organization done by the union and its ability to provide a counterbalance to the intrinsic power imbalance between the administration and individual workers. I don't know how it is in other departments, but here there's certainly not the attitude that we are labor. Our faculty view themselves as high-end who bring in students and money, and the university loves them. Now that's true in many ways but there also are ways in which that's not true and ways in which things the faculty want wouldn't be coming except for the union pushing on them. ■

## MSP GRANT PROGRAM

Applications are now being accepted for MSP's Grant Program. In its ninth year, this program provides monetary support for activities that advance the mission of the MSP. Successful grants will enhance 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 applied to research projects. A 3-5 page application for projects must be received no later than March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. All projects are to be completed by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and a 6 month status report must be received by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Upon completion of the project, MSP must be notified and it must be discussed how the results of the project are to be disseminated. Possible examples would be a report at a membership meeting or an article in the MSP newsletter.

Complete applications will include:

- Your name, title and department
- A description of the activity the grant will support
- Explanation of how the activity specifically advances MSP goals
- An itemized budget that clearly shows how requested funds are to be used.
- Plans for publication/dissemination of the results

Please send complete applications to [msp@umass.edu](mailto:msp@umass.edu) by March 30th, 2019.

Grants will be reviewed by a committee of MSP members appointed by the MSP officers. Applicants will be notified of decisions no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.



The MSP Executive Board and Departmental Representatives meet to discuss plans for engagement of members this academic year.



(Policy on sexual harassment, continued)

Chancellor shortly. Once the committee finishes reviewing the policy, it will work on writing new procedures this spring semester. While this work is essential to assure speedy investigations, resolutions, and due process for complainants and respondents, we anticipate that the MSP's recommendations may meet some resistance from the administration. If so, we will be reaching out to MSP members to assure that your concerns are heard and addressed.

During this period of flux we strongly encourage you to contact the MSP should you have any question or concern regarding sexual harassment or assault. In the meantime we intend to continue our efforts to assure clear and fair policies for the entire campus. ■

(What happened to merit pay?, continued)

What about merit? The money that pays for merit usually comes in the form of a 0.5% addition to the regular statewide raise. The reason for this is that most other state unions have step increases built into their contracts, and these regular step increases are based on longevity. The net increase in the payroll due to the step increases works out to about 0.5% of payroll. MSP members do not get longevity increases, and the 0.5% is added to the regular statewide raise. The MSP bargaining team usually agrees to have this extra 0.5% given out as merit increases. This year the Governor refused to give us the extra 0.5%, and based on our principle that cost of living must be met first, the contract contains no regular merit increase funding. The administration

and the MSP bargaining team have agreed that the next contract will contain funding for the merit for the three years of the current contract plus for the years of the next contract. We will be playing catch-up on merit in the next contract.

The administration proposed that, rather than the regular merit increase, a one-time merit bonus replace it. We agreed that there could be a merit bonus, but we insisted that the years of this contract must have regular merit. The logic is that someone with a really spectacular year during this contract would never get the long-term increase in base pay that regular merit provides. At this point it looks as if the administration will not have money to fund their proposed one-time merit bonuses. ■

(Fund our Future, continued)

to the level of per-student spending in 200. (You can learn more about the campaign and look at what every campus would get at <http://massteacher.org/fundourfuture>.)

Last summer, many of us were crushed when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court threw out – in what I see as a political act – the Fair Share Amendment, which would have raised taxes on the top 0.5% and produced \$2 billion every year. After mourning for a day, MTA President Merrie Najimy and I decided that the only answer was to forge ahead. Fund Our Future is the pathway for us to achieve a generational reinvestment in public education, pre-k through higher ed.

We only win if build involvement of all of our members become involved by signing petitions of support and urging state reps and senators to cosponsor our bill, not to mention stand up to the Speaker of the House, who has consistently stalled revenue and funding increases.

I'll be on campus on January 30 to detail for all the campus unions the outline of our plan to win the Fund Our Future legislation. In the meantime, write me with your ideas and questions – [mpage@massteacher.org](mailto:mpage@massteacher.org). ■

(Teach-In, continued)

students. Despite their distinct scholarly interests, each panelist touched on the history of racism and how that history might inform efforts to press for change today. During the question and answer session, one student asked about the lack of the University's seeming disinterest in holding accountable those who had perpetrated these incidents. In response, Afroam Professor and MSP member Amilcar Shabazz, encouraged students to question a reliance on punishment, suggesting instead a restorative justice approach.

Audience members raised similar concerns in response to a point raised by Afroam Professor and MSP member Britt Rusert about campus policing. For Rusert, an important connection between the discriminatory practices of institutions like campus police and individual instances of racial profiling. When offered an opportunity to pose questions, one student asked the chief of campus police, who was in attendance, about a recent instance when

Amherst police had pulled over her friends for little more than seemingly the color of their skin. Several students also asked why University administrators weren't in attendance to speak to their concerns, noting that in response to similar instances of hate speech akin to the one found in Melville, that they had been told by administrators not to speak to the press and had quietly been offered the option of being moved to another residence.

With a substantial amount of time for audience members to raise these and other questions, the event left many in attendance both unsettled by the current climate and somewhat unsure about the next steps forward. While various groups, from the Student Government Association to the Graduate Employee Organization to campus chapter of the NAACP, have offered to take up these issues, it remains clear that there remains an important role for faculty to play in charting a way forward against hate on campus. ■

Photo credits this issue include Eric Berlin, Dave Gross, Emily Steelhammer, and Eve Weinbaum.



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