

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

Another academic year has flown by – the days seem long but the years seem short.

It's hard to believe that we are going to be back at the bargaining table soon to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement.

In our last round of negotiations, MSP won many of our top priorities. We have heard from so many faculty and librarians who have benefitted from these changes, including:

- Significant increases in salary floors for tenure-track and NTT faculty and librarians
- Significant increases in promotional bumps for all ranks
- A new pay equity review process and central pool of funds to remedy inequities
- Semester-long professional improvement leaves for non-tenure-track faculty
- Clarification of librarian evaluation and promotion processes
- A reduction in maximum teaching loads for full-time lecturers based on the expectation of service and participation in faculty governance
- Stronger protections for academic freedom to cover service as well as teaching and research, and to cover our work inside and outside the classroom
- Stronger faculty role in tenure and promotion decisions
- Clarification of policies against sexual harassment and misconduct/Title IX; typical faculty and librarians are not "mandatory reporters"

...and more. A full summary of the

contract is here: https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1029/summary_of_2017-2020_contracts.pdf.

We are still working on several issues that needed some time to resolve. We created joint MSP-administration committees to work on:

- The new pay equity process
- Gender equity recommendations across campus
- A pilot project for converting courses to an online or multi-modal format
- Research and Extension Professor titles and promotion processes
- Revising policies and procedures for sexual harassment under Title IX
- Considering holistic teaching evaluation methods
- Proposing a "teaching professor" track beginning in CICS.

The last two of those joint committees – analyzing holistic teaching evaluations, and figuring out a "teaching professor" track – were postponed until the coming fall. All of the other committees made significant progress and came up with creative mutually acceptable solutions to longstanding problems. Thanks to the dozens of MSP members who volunteered their time, energy, and expertise to improve our working



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May 16, 2019, 4:30 - 6:00 PM
Springfield
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conditions and our students' learning conditions.

The only problem with the last round of contract negotiations – and the round before that – was how long the process took. Although the union proposals were ready in advance, and although we agreed to set aside some of the thorniest issues into committees, it still took us nearly two years to negotiate the contract – to the continuing frustration of the union and the administration. Part of the problem is a convoluted statewide system in which the administration waits for the governor's office to release economic "parameters" before UMass makes a salary offer. Even after that happened, the UMass President's office was not persuaded that the legislature would fully fund the contracts, so the union watched as the legislature, governor, and university sparred over funding for a year and a half.

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Advocacy Day at the State House

By Erica Scharrer, MSP Vice President and Department of Communication

On Thursday, March 21, about three dozen faculty, librarians, and staff—some still bleary-eyed, many holding commuter mugs of coffee—met at 7:15 am at the Haigis Mall to board a bus bound for the State House. They were motivated to bring a message to legislators for Higher Education Lobby Day, that our students should not be burdened with so much debt and that our campus needs a greater commitment from the state to protect students' access to a first-rate experience at UMass. The day was an opportunity to add personal accounts and face-to-face conversations between UMass folks and key senators and representatives in support of the Cherish Act, the once-in-a-generation opportunity to infuse public higher education in the Commonwealth with a renewed financial commitment from the state.



Discussing the Cherish Act with Rep. Natalie Blais.

Upon our arrival in Boston we gathered at MTA headquarters at 20 Ashburton Place to be briefed by MTA staff with tips for the conversations with legislators and legislative aides and background information on the twin Fund Our Future bills, the Cherish Act for higher education and the Promise Act for pre-K-12. I was thrilled to have Mindy Domb, Representative for the 3rd Hampshire

District, and Jo Comerford, Senator for the Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester district come speak to the group assembled in the MTA offices. They both underscored the importance of our visits to the State House and communicated their unequivocal support. I was inspired to be in the same room working for a common cause with these brilliant newly elected legislators! At the close of the debriefing session, we had what I jokingly called the shortest march ever, waving our Fund Our Futures signs as we crossed the street between Ashburton Place and the side entrance of the State House.



Christine Hatch in front of her picture on display in the Capitol Rotunda.

MSP staff and leadership had worked with our colleagues at the MTA to divide the UMass Amherst contingent, which included faculty, librarians and staff, into small groups and match them to specific members of the legislature for meeting appointments. We met with some of the Higher Education committee, with legislators who had not yet signed on to support the Cherish Act, and with our own local representatives, among others. My group—which included Sociology professor and former MSP President Dan Clawson and Director of the Labor Center professor Cedric De Leon—had the opportunity to speak to House Speaker DeLeo's main staffer. MTA president Merrie Najimy and vice president Max Page joined our conversation, and we all spoke from the heart about the ways that both the Cherish Act and the Promise Act would

make a vitally important impact on our students. Dan, Cedric and I also spoke with Senator Dean Tran of the Worcester and Middlesex district. Senator Tran had not signed on to the Cherish Act bill as co-sponsor, and we did our level best to persuade him. He listened attentively to the stories we told about the student financial struggles that we've witnessed at UMass, and it felt like a tremendous opportunity to impress upon him the importance of the bill and of state support for public higher education more generally. ■



The UMass Amherst contingent at the State House on March 21.

Dan and Dave Sat Down for a Chat...

Dan Clawson and Dave Gross were both planning for their retirements at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year when they had a conversation in February 2019. The topics they covered included history of the MSP, life at the University, and what lay ahead in retirement.

Dan died unexpectedly from a heart attack on the evening of May 6, just two weeks before he would have retired. Dan had taught in the Sociology Department for over 40 years. He served a term as MSP president, and many terms on the board, and he organized many events and campaigns for the MSP including the very first "Save UMass" campaign for revenue. It is not possible to capture the extent of his work for the campus, the MSP, and the MTA. He was a tireless activist and advocate and organizer, in addition to being an amazing teacher, advisor, writer, scholar, and a devoted colleague and friend. It is impossible to imagine UMass or the MSP/MTA without Dan Clawson. We are still processing this tremendous loss. A tribute to Dan will be in the first issue of the MSP Chronicle next semester.

The following are excerpts from Dan and Dave's February conversation.

DG: You and I have both been at UMass for a while. What brought you to the Union?

DC: Well, I'm a leftist who was studying labor, and when I arrived in the fall of 1978 there was an organized union but there was not yet a contract. My department, Sociology, was somewhat peculiarly a hotbed of anti-union activity, so I became the Union department rep the first week I set foot on campus, becoming involved with MSP at some level from the very beginning. Back then I thought that the Union would be strong no matter what, which led me to put my energy into other kinds of political activity. At some point I got more engaged with the Union.

And how about you?

DG: I've been here since '86. I was a postdoc at Cornell looking for a faculty job and UMass and this area were good fits for me. For about the first half of the time I've been here I didn't pay any attention at all to Union things, which was and is pretty typical of folks in the north end of campus. Then for some reason I don't recall, maybe an issue that rang true for me, I went to a Union meeting in the basement of the Campus Center. I remember very clearly that I sat down and this fellow, Dan Clawson, came over to talk to me. You were the MSP President at the time running the meeting, I was a new person and maybe I was a spy for the administration.

I suppose I liked what I heard, because then I started paying more attention

to the Union's work. In not too many years Randy Phillis became MSP President. I had known Randy for a long time from our parallel academic pursuits, and one day he said "Why don't you come and see what it's like to be on the Executive Board?" so I said "Yeah, okay, that sounds like something I could take on" and I've been doing it ever since.



You said that you've been involved with the MSP since day one. What are some of the names of the people who were involved in the Union when you arrived?

DC: I can think of four key people. Jules Chametzky was President at some point in there – I don't think he was President in '78 when I got here. Bruce Laurie was President not long after that. Sarah Lennox in German was vice president forever. John Bracey from Afro-Am Studies, who for years was absolutely central in all kinds of things.

DG: You've seen the activities of the

MSP for a long time. Do you think the thrust of what's been done has pretty much been in the right direction or do you think along the way we kind of strayed from where we should be?

DC: I think MSP is a model of what a union should be, again with lots of variations over time in how it operates. At the same time the country has moved to the right and all sorts of business practices have been adopted at more and more places. The University was one of the last to get hit by the neoliberal shift to the right, but now we're getting it full bore. It's tough when you're fighting against the tide. Even if you are doing very well on your own campus, and are better positioned than most other universities, assorted conditions are eroding nonetheless.

DG: I guess I'd have to agree with you that the Union seems to me to be the sort of single bastion against things like privatization at all levels not just within the membership of our group but everybody working on campus.

DC: Well, there's free speech. A recent victory that seems to me so impressive is that our contract now guarantees us free speech for things we put up on social media and so on, where legally that doesn't exist at other places. There are people around the country fired for what they wrote on social media and now for our faculty we've got a contract that protects us from that. If other faculty around the country could win that, it would be a significant improvement for academic freedom.

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Report from the Spring General Assembly

By Dave Gross, MSP Treasurer and Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

The annual MSP General Assembly was held on Monday, April 29 with about 75 members present. Eve Weinbaum presided over the proceedings that included a report from Max Page, MSP member and current MTA Vice President, on the ongoing efforts by the MTA to return funding for public K-12 schools and public higher education back to levels of a decade ago. The overall efforts, which involve substantial organizing of MTA locals such as the MSP and lobbying of legislators, are under the umbrella of the Fund Our Future campaign. (See the article on Advocacy Day in this issue.)

Max also told the Assembly about legislative hearings on the Promise and Cherish Acts, which are the bills to be submitted to the legislature to provide the funding for public education, that were held at the State House on the next day, April 30. Attendees were encouraged to write testimony for the State House hearings. A large number of statements were collected, and these were carried to the hearings by Max. The testimonies were entered into the record by Rep. Mindy Domb and Sen. Jo Comerford.

Brief reports were given from bargaining teams working on areas that were left incomplete after main table negotiations for our current contract were completed. The committee working on equity pay increases (what used to be called anomaly pay increases) has analyzed data from one large and one small department, and the



General Assembly attendees writing testimony for the State House hearings on April 30.

committee has begun to define how the process will move forward next year for all unit members. The team negotiating on improved contract language for faculty working under research and extension titles has made progress in better defining how research and extension faculty are evaluated for promotion, in clarifying what being an extension professor means, and in improving conditions for research faculty who experience a funding gap. The team working on processes for reporting and investigating sexual harassment has made good progress in clarifying that faculty without special titles are not mandatory reporters. The online education negotiating team has agreed to have a small number of pilot studies of course conversions for parallel online and face-to-face instruction in order to understand conditions that need to be bargained in the future. The gender equity bargaining team has met to create language on discovering and removing gender-based unequal treatment across campus.

The MSP budget for 2019-2020 was approved with a zero dues increase. Although we have lost income from agency fee payers due to the Supreme Court's Janus decision, we have added some members to help reduce the amount of the loss. The General Assembly approved using some of our reserves to cover the lost income. Additionally, an amendment to the budget that was proposed by the Executive Board added funding of a new effort that will allow members to apply for dues abatement due to financial hardship. A committee will be formed to define the eligibility rules and application process, and then to review applications. More information on this process will be available by the early part of the next academic year.

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Mickey Gallagher, the MTA field agent who has worked with MSP for the past 12 years, holding her "happy retirement" cake at the General Assembly.

MSP Retirees Unite!

Starting in September 2019 any retired MSP members are invited to join a working group that will consider ways in which retirees can contribute to the efforts of the MSP. Dave Gross has committed to facilitating the group's efforts, at least at the outset.

Some of the things that the retiree group *could* do include helping the MSP office organize for big events, doing phone banking or canvassing, interfacing with the MTA, handing out materials for other union locals when their members are uncomfortable doing that, or just staying more in touch with campus union activities. We also might decide to do some regular social event. It's really up to the group to determine what the focus will be.

If you are a former MSP member who is now retired and if this sounds interesting to you, please let us know. Emily Steelhammer will be working with the group initially to get it organized. Contact her at steelhammer@umass.edu to get more information and to get on the email list for updates and meeting planning.



Merrie Najimi gives Sen. Jo Comerford a Fund Our Future t-shirt at MTA Headquarters during preparations for Advocacy Day visits with legislators.

(President's Desk, continued)

Last year, the MSP and all of the UMass faculty and staff unions filed charges with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations. We said that the employer had not met the legal requirement to "bargain in good faith" because of the extreme delaying tactics. The DLR agreed that we had met the standard for probable cause. Our statewide union, the MTA, also introduced legislation that would streamline the process to match other states' collective bargaining laws.

This coming fall, as we head back into negotiations for the contract that expires in June 2020, things will be different. We will not accept the kind of delays we have seen in the past, which cause real hardships for our members and waste so much time and energy. We plan to be clear about our deadline, and faculty and librarians need to be ready to stand up for our rights if the UMass President's office does not bargain in good faith.

Faculty and librarians have done our part. We spent the year advocating for the "Fund Our Future" campaign to increase funding for public higher education statewide. Our members went to the State House and met with our legislators, wrote and videotaped testimony for legislative hearings, marched with K-12 educators fighting for the Promise Act, marched with students demanding an end to the student debt crisis, and created a beautiful photography display of faculty and librarians at work, which was prominently displayed in the State House in April (see the Advocacy Day article on page 2 in this issue). As we continue to fight for the resources our university deserves, we expect the administration to work with us to negotiate fair and timely contracts.

We are looking forward to working with you all in the coming year. In the meantime, congratulations on a job well done. Enjoy the summer! ■

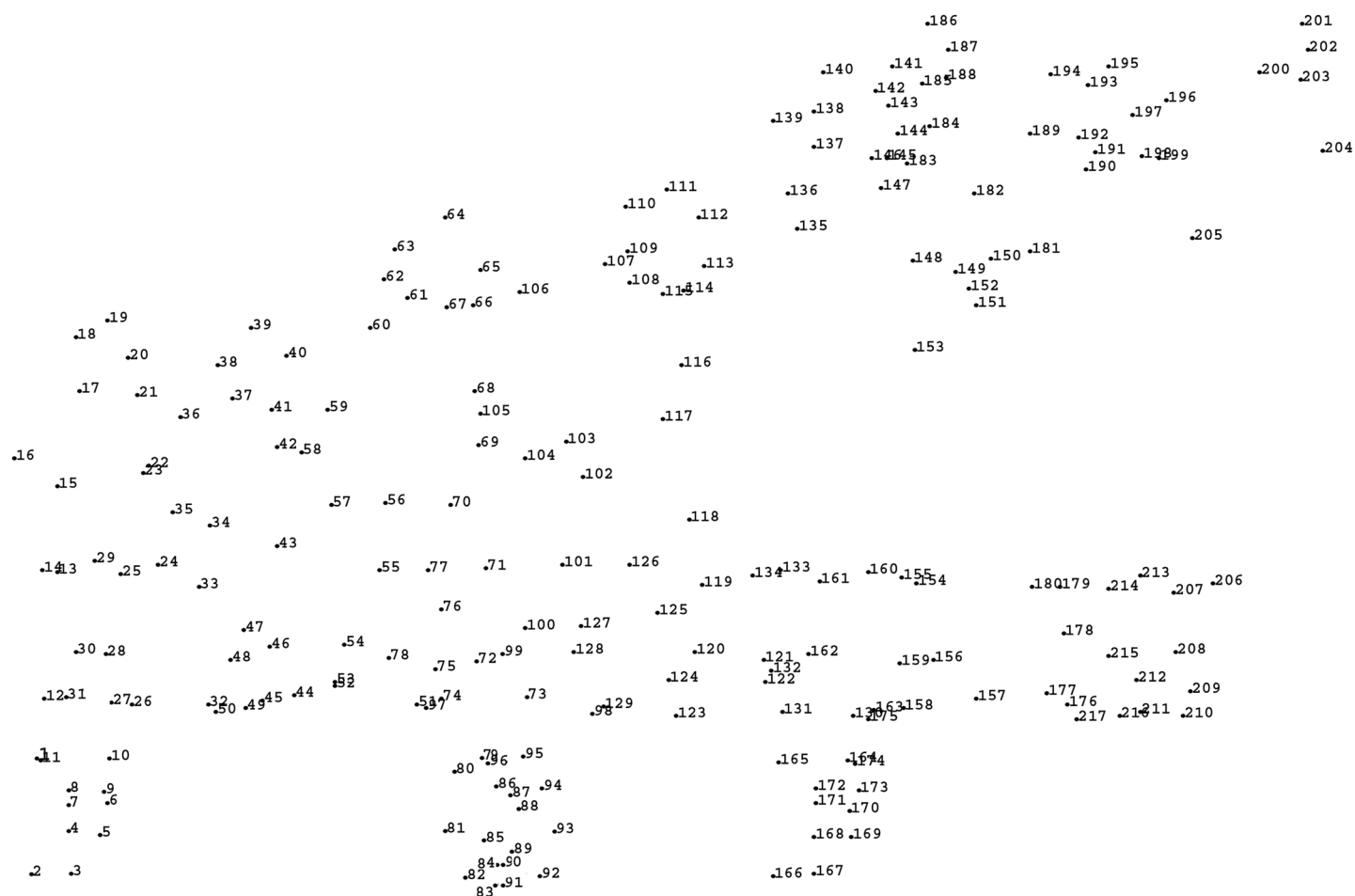


The intrepid UMass Amherst Advocacy Day team gets ready to board the bus for the trip to Boston on March 21. Yes, it was a yellow school bus. All members of the team reverted to their third grade personas during the drive.

Join Our Department Representatives!

The MSP Department Reps are the first line of communication between what is happening in departments and the union. We rely on Reps to bring to the MSP issues that matter to faculty and librarians, while also letting our members know what the union is planning and how members can be involved. Department Reps help MSP advance our mission as a social justice union to fight for more than just bread-and-butter issues, and to be engaged and involved in issues affecting our students and our community. MSP Department Reps engage with MSP in 5 main areas: new employee outreach, member involvement, engagement in union initiatives and campaigns, serving as a union resource in departments when members have issues, and communication about things happening in the department that MSP should know about. Each Department Rep is asked to attend 1-2 meetings a semester with the MSP Executive Board.

We want to make sure that every department has a representative. Multiple reps for each department are encouraged. If you are interested in serving for your department please contact Emily Steelhammer at steelhammer@umass.edu.



THE MSP PUZZLE

The puzzle in the March 2019 issue featured a word jumble array from which six answers (note that it didn't say "words") that were specific to our union were to be identified. Those six answers were Alisa, Emily, Eve, Lori, Mickey and MSP. As promised, all six of the answers could be found on the MSP website. (The names are of people who are very often found in the MSP office.) Steve E. submitted the first correct answer to the puzzle.

You feel that inner child, right? You support MSP and MTA initiatives, right? Well, this issue's puzzle is right up your alley. As you can see, it is a dot puzzle. Just trace the dots and see what you get. And yes, there are 217 dots.

Because this is the final Chronicle of the academic year, there are no entries for prizes for this puzzle. Just completing the puzzle is your reward this time.

(General Assembly, continued)

Officers and Executive Board members for open seats were elected at the General Assembly including Jen Adams (Treasurer), Kate Hudson (Secretary), Erica Scharrer (Grievance Officer) as well as new or re-elected Executive Board members Asha Nadkarni, Jeanne Brunner, Sandy Litchfield and Tristram Seidler. Delegates to the 2019 MTA Annual Meeting were also elected. ■

(Dan & Dave, continued)

DG: It would be great if we could get that picked up in different places. I don't know how we would do that other than to proselytize and try and find other hotbeds of more liberal thought and try to convince them to persuade their administrations that it's a good idea.

DC: Well I think faculty definitely want it and you would think that administrations would in theory want to defend it. Yet when the crunch comes, administrators are always under all sorts of pressure to crack down on things.

DG: So what do you plan to do with yourself when you retire?

DC: Well, actually, it's two Union-centered things. One is to be more active in the MTA progressive caucus Educators for a Democratic Union to help build it up. The caucus has made a big difference in the MTA, but it's not nearly as strong as it should be. The other is to write about the transformation of the MSP and the MTA and what's involved in that. I've been doing a lot of field work to prepare for this next adventure.

And you?

DG: First I'm very much going to enjoy a relaxed schedule to get away from the routine. I don't mind meetings and I really enjoy teaching, but the repetitive schedule is what I will be pleased to depart from. I still have some research stuff that I want to finish including collecting a bit more data before it is ready to analyze. And then of course I have to write up the results. I will be doing that for a while.

You and I talked about trying to engage with MSP as retiree members including, perhaps, to get other retirees involved in MSP efforts. I am willing to put some time and energy into that. I would like to stay attached to the campus, the faculty and the librarians and being involved with MSP retirees sounds like a good way to do it.

I also have two longtime interests. One is birding and I intend to get out and do a lot more of that. I'm also quite interested in genealogy and I hope to pursue that a bit more than I have been able to do. That plus the volunteering I want to do here on campus I think that'll keep me occupied.

DC: Your point about relaxing is definitely one of my reasons for leaving my day job.

DG: Yeah, I don't know if I'd say so much "relaxing" as just being able to do what I want to do rather than what somebody else thinks I should be doing. I'm the kind of person who likes to be doing something, so I don't think my activity level will go down. It's just that it will be on my own terms, although you could argue that taking a nice walk in the woods and looking at birds is relaxing.

DC: I am a workaholic and I worry some about what will happen when the work isn't there and will I find myself at loose ends.

DG: Do you have any wise words for people who are thinking about retiring?

DC: Not at all. I don't know what I'm getting into.

DG: Yes, I'd have to say the same thing. Maybe my one wise word would be to pay attention to your



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retirement income and how that all works because there are important decisions that have to be made, and many are irreversible. I will be meeting with the HR folks in Whitmore to do my paperwork.

DC: That's a most important and consequential decision, but we will also need to be ever vigilant about protecting our pensions because there definitely are moves to try to take them away, and they also are not protected from inflation from the perspective of faculty. Only the first \$13,000 of it is protected from inflation, but very few faculty retire on \$13,000 pensions. Ensuring that what is an outstanding pension that we're so lucky to have stays a valuable pension 10 years, 20 years after we've retired is an important thing.

DG: I agree. And I think trying to work with legislators to increase beyond \$13,000 the amount that receives a cost-of-living adjustment would be well worth the effort. I also think that retiree health insurance benefits are quite vulnerable because they are quite good for retirees now and I could see that being something that a conservative governor might want to roll back.

DC: Absolutely. Health care is being squeezed all over the country.

DG: Can you think of anything else that we haven't covered?

DC: It would be good for somebody to do a history of MSP's heroic struggles and key points in the past. How we helped form the graduate union or when we went on strike, or whatever else. ■

Photo credits this issue include Eric Berlin, Emily Steelhammer, and the MTA web site.



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