

10/14/21 Allunit: Coalition proposals for climate justice

Dear colleagues,

Today at 5:00 pm the unions are joining with students and community groups to host the [Community Forum on Climate Change](#). Please join us. As your bargaining team, we wanted to take this opportunity to go into depth about the MSP's proposals around environmental sustainability and climate justice. These are proposals that we made in coalition with the other campus unions, with extensive input from faculty and librarians and staff across campus over the past several years. In coming weeks, we will also provide information about the top priorities that MSP has put forward at the bargaining table -- including salary and benefits, racial and gender equity, non-tenure-track faculty equity, and more -- we are working on many issues and hoping to begin making real progress in negotiations in the next few weeks.

The Climate Justice proposals we have presented to the administration fall into two categories. The first category pertains to mandatory subjects of bargaining, that is, those issues that are detailed in the contract and about which the administration must bargain. The proposals in this first category are related to two articles in the contract: Article 19 (Working Conditions), and Article 27 (Supplemental Compensation/Benefits).

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all take a closer look at our working spaces, and we have several work-condition proposals under Article 19.1, which states that "no bargaining unit member shall be compelled to work under conditions which confront him/her with an imminent safety and/or health danger." These include:

- Repairing sick buildings
- Retrofitting and deferred maintenance
- Upgrading ventilation systems and abating hazards
- Providing comfortable and productive working spaces

In addition, parking remains a perennial issue on our campus, and MSP would like to change policies that discourage our members from practices like carpooling and biking to campus. We have a series of proposals relating to Article 19.4:

- Occasional Parking Permits, including parking fee reduction for regular PVTA commuters, bicycle or pedestrian commuters
- Flexible carpool parking permits
- Install additional Electric Vehicle charging stations
- Install parking spots for bicycles in the Campus Center Garage

We also have several proposals about campus closure (which would have cost-savings and environmental benefits) under Article 27.5. These include:

- Close campus the week of Thanksgiving
- Close campus between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day
- Expand subsidies for PVTA bus service to include express buses and services for 12-month employees

In addition to proposals that fall under subjects of mandatory bargaining, we have a series of proposals which more properly fall under the category of bargaining for the common good. The administration is not required to engage with us in contract negotiations on these issues, but many of our proposals in this category align with the vision set forth in the Chancellor's Carbon Mitigation task force, and are in our common interest.

Proposals related to facilities include:

- Plan for net zero emissions by 2032, consistent with the campus goals. According to campus planning documents, buildings are responsible for 85% of campus emissions. Procure electricity from 100% renewable energy sources or offset/reduce emissions for net zero.
- All renovation and retrofitting work to be done by campus workers with career ladders and focus on gender and racial justice.
- All new and renovated buildings including those under construction should include sheltered bicycle parking and showers for bikers or walkers.
- Establish a campus-wide policy to prioritize large donations to be used for deferred maintenance and sustainable energy plans rather than new buildings. "Green heroes" should be awarded naming rights; encourage retrofitting and rehabilitation of existing structures.
- Cut campus ties with Bank of America and provide ATMs from local banks instead. Bank of America has a terrible environmental record and is among the top financers of tar sands oil extraction, fracked oil and gas drilling, and ultra-deep-water oil and gas drilling.

Proposals related to parking include:

- Create a sustainable transportation multi-union-administration committee to review campus plans with partners including PVTA, Town of Amherst, and UMass Parking Services. The committee would determine how to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on all major thoroughfares around campus, reduce pedestrian-bicyclist conflict areas on campus, and determine routes and schedules for year-round transit service to facilitate non-automobile commuting.
- Install free or low-cost Electric Vehicle charging stations in every lot.
- Convert 4 car spaces on Level 4 of the Campus Center Garage into 40 bicycle-rack spots; provide pump, tool racks, charging stations for electric bicycles.
- Plow the Rail Trail (Woodmont Rd., Northampton, to Station Road, Amherst) to enable year-round bike commuting.
- Reintroduce the M40 PVTA express bus between UMass and Smith College to run four times in the morning and four times in the afternoon/evening
- UMass should pay the per-person fare for UMass students and employees who use PVTA bus services.
- Allow release time for sustainable professional travel (e.g train) that takes longer.
- Expand telecommuting options for staff and faculty
- Transition all faculty and staff to a four-day work week

Finally, we propose expanding the existing learning labs and sustainability initiatives to include Climate Justice Coaches. We propose providing stipends to at least 12 coaches, with diversity, equity, and inclusion considered in their selection. Coaches will:

- plan student education around climate justice
- recommend curriculum changes
- create online resources
- organize campus events focused on environmental justice

We realize that these proposals are ambitious and go beyond what might be typically achieved in bargaining. But we embark on this mission in coalition with the other campus unions, and with the knowledge that such measures are necessary if we are to have any kind of shared future.

In solidarity,

Eve Weinbaum, Marc Liberatore, Jacquie Kurland, Asha Nadkarni, Lori Reardon, K. Zdepski, with Mickey Gallagher as chief negotiator