

12/22/2020: [Allunit] FAQ and stimulus funds

Dear colleagues:

We've just learned the good news: Congress has passed a \$900 billion stimulus package that includes \$20 billion earmarked specifically for higher education. We don't know the specific details yet – but it will bring a lot of money to our campus. By comparison, the CARES Act last spring provided \$14 billion for higher education, and UMass Amherst received \$18 million. We expect a similar formula with this package, which means our campus should receive more than \$20 million in new funds. That would turn the projected deficit into a significant surplus for this fiscal year. Some of the new funds are likely to be restricted – for example, to be spent on COVID-related expenses – but if this federal money would pay for PPE, testing, ventilation, and other costs, that would free up existing funds for salaries and operating expenses. We will keep you posted as we learn more details.

Before we learned the good news about the stimulus package, MSP members were working hard to organize our response to the proposed pay cut for faculty and librarians. We created a new FAQ https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1261/faq_from_2020-12-11_membership_meeting_final.pdf, with responses to the questions we heard during and after the membership meeting on December 11. Some of these responses may be outdated very soon; we hope and expect that it will not be necessary to discuss pay cuts as the stimulus funds become available.

MSP is continuing to work closely in coalition with USA and PSU, meeting several times a week, and coordinating with all of the other campus unions as well. We won't rest until all staff are brought back from indefinite furloughs and restored to full-time status. We are pursuing avenues to put pressure on the Trustees – through social media, filing legal charges, in individual meetings with trustees, with our state legislators, and working with students including the student trustees and leaders of the Student Government Association. We are united in our belief that the UMass Board of Trustees has the responsibility to help the campus weather this pandemic without inflicting pain on staff, faculty, or students. Let us know if you would like to join MSP's full-funding organizing committee and share

your creative ideas for memes, media campaigns, and talking with your colleagues about full funding and full staffing for our campus.

Finally, a huge thanks to everyone who gave so generously to the Solidarity Fund. We raised more than \$50,000 and were able to provide holiday support to hundreds of furloughed staff members. The last batch of gift cards will go out shortly so there is still time for last-minute gifts if you haven't given yet:

<https://sites.google.com/view/umass-mutual-aid-network>

We'll update the FAQ as we learn more about the stimulus funds and budget projections. In the meantime, congratulations on finishing a difficult semester! I hope that you and your loved ones are healthy and safe. Please enjoy some time off during this break – you've earned it.

With best wishes for good things in 2021,

Eve