

4/20/2020 [Allunit] Important Updates from MSP

Dear colleagues,

I hope this finds you healthy and in as good spirits as possible. MSP has been in regular contact with the administration as well as the other unions, and we have a number of updates to share.

Here we offer information on:

- 1) MSP support for frontline workers and UMass students in need
- 2) Key issues facing graduate students
- 3) Faculty access to research funds and departmental hiring of students
- 4) University planning for the fall semester
- 5) Bargaining updates
- 6) Upcoming dates to remember

1) MSP support for frontline workers and UMass students in need

MSP is a member of the Western Mass Area Labor Federation, representing 50,000 workers in the region. The WMALF has created <http://www.feedthefrontlinewm.com> – an effort among working people to support those who are on the frontlines. All the money we raise goes directly to local restaurants that are struggling to stay in business and pay their workers. The funds are used to deliver meals to frontline workers – nurses and hospital techs, grocery workers, garbage collectors, bus drivers, nursing home staff – many of whom are working long hours with no hazard pay and not enough protection. Please contribute if you can – <http://www.feedthefrontlinewm.com>.

MSP also contributed to the UMass funds supporting undergraduate and graduate students in need. You can read the press release about our donations here: <https://umassmsp.org/sidebar/announcements/msp-covid-relief-donation/>. Many other great organizations are in dire need, including the Amherst Survival Center, <https://amherstsurvival.org/donate/>, and the Pioneer Valley Workers Center solidarity fund to support undocumented workers who cannot get unemployment insurance or stimulus checks: <https://pvworkerscenter.org/undocu-fund/>.

2) Key issues facing graduate students

Many faculty members have expressed concerns about our graduate students. MSP has talked with the Chancellor and Provost about two major issues: a) the need for summer support for grad students without jobs, especially international students who cannot go home and cannot work off-campus, and b) delaying the demolition of North Village and Lincoln Apartments. We await the administration's response. For more information see <http://geouaw.org>.

3) Faculty access to research funds and grad student hiring

We have heard several reports from departments where faculty were told that they may not spend their own research funds (including RTF, PMYR, start-up, MSP support funds) without petitioning to their chairs for an exception to a budget “freeze.” This is not true: faculty research funds are restricted to your use. We have also heard that some chairs are not permitting faculty to hire graduate research assistants this spring and summer. We have confirmed with the central administration that faculty are not only permitted but encouraged to spend our research funds to hire graduate research assistants. While departments are limiting new spending, the administration has assured us that existing funds can be spent as planned and finding ways to support graduate students is a top priority. Please let us know if you encounter administrative obstacles in these areas.

4) University planning for the fall semester

We have heard many questions from MSP members about what the future might hold. The Provost is leading a committee to consider options for the fall semester; at this moment it appears unlikely that the campus will open its doors to all 30,000 students on September 1st, but no decisions have been made. Visa offices are closed and international students and faculty cannot make travel plans. While the campus is planning for a significant decrease in revenue in the fall, MSP is working with other unions to fight for a major stimulus for higher education in the next federal CARES bill. We are urging the administration to join forces to win the relief we need, rather than imposing budget cuts that would cripple the university.

Many of you have asked about the possibility of retrenchment in the fall. MSP’s fact sheet about unemployment insurance, layoffs, retrenchment, and furloughs is here: https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1238/retrenchment-_layoffs-_unemployment_revised_4_16.pdf. We will keep you updated as we learn more.

5) Bargaining updates

We are continuing to negotiate the next contract, working especially on issues of equity and justice. We recently made a series of proposals related to climate justice and sustainability (when campus re-opens) including:

- Transitioning the campus to a four-day work week (with no reduction in pay)
- Incentivizing faculty and staff to bike, walk, or take the bus to campus by improving PVRTA, bike lanes, and flexible occasional parking
- Closing the campus the week of Thanksgiving and the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

We have also put forth some important proposals for librarians, including:

- More equitable work assignments
- Streamlined process for flex time

Finally, both sides made a series of proposals related to non-tenure-track faculty.

- The administration proposed paying part-time NTT faculty (adjuncts) below the existing salary floors. Because of our strong protests, the administration has withdrawn this proposal.
- MSP presented a proposal to create a Teaching Tenure Track for lecturers who do curricular development and scholarship as well as teaching, with the emphasis on teaching (and with workloads adjusted accordingly). The administration has agreed to further discussions about this proposal.
- MSP proposed that years of service, rather than FTE, count toward continuous appointment and promotion.

6) Dates to remember:

- MSP will hold our spring General Assembly by Zoom at **noon on Monday, April 27**. If you would like to attend, please RSVP now to msp@umass.edu. We will send you the Zoom link. The General Assembly will be run as a town-hall meeting, including bargaining updates as well as questions and answers about what to expect in the coming months.
- We have extended the deadline for MSP grants to May 1, 2020. Details can be found here: <https://umassmsp.org/member-benefits/msp-grant-program/>.
- If you received an email about the COACHE survey, PLEASE take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data will be extremely important as we attempt to improve faculty members' ability to do excellent teaching, research and service.

Allunit mailing list

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<https://list.umass.edu/mailman/listinfo/allunit>