

9/13/2020 [Allunit] Supporting Staff and Solidarity Fund

Dear colleagues,

You have probably heard that the administration is planning hundreds of additional staff layoffs while refusing to discuss alternative cost-saving measures with the unions. USA and PSU have filed legal charges against the university, and have still not received any lists of which members will be laid off. The administration is now threatening to cut off staff members' health insurance during a pandemic, which is unconscionable.

The MSP is fully supporting USA and PSU in their demands for fair and transparent negotiations. The labor coalition has repeatedly asked the administration to open its books and present us with real numbers and projections. The Chancellor's memo of 8/27 includes a projection of more than \$30 million lost tuition revenue – which has not happened – as well as a \$36.7 million cut to state funds – when the state budget is level-funded until November. We are researchers, and we make decisions based on data rather than on fear and uncertainty. Firing people because of worry that “things will be bad” is not only immoral and unnecessary, it contradicts the intellectual project of the university.

Some of our members have expressed a desire to contribute to cost-savings to mitigate staff layoffs, and we hear you. The MSP did ask to be part of the negotiations with the other staff unions, in coalition bargaining. The administration refused. We will continue to seek ways to minimize campus layoffs, with input from all of our members. MSP represents people who earn \$7,000 per course without benefits; our members include more than 500 faculty without tenure and librarians without job security. This makes transparency and equity essential. And we must have real negotiations. Neither MSP nor the staff unions want faculty or staff to make sacrifices without assurance that these sacrifices will save jobs. The unions already offered \$6 million in cost savings, and the administration simply refused – making us wonder if the goal is cost-savings or simply eliminating staff. Staff are being told that no matter what they offer, including widespread short-term furloughs, layoffs are coming. We need good-faith negotiations.

We have two immediate asks to support staff now:

1. Call or email your state legislators:

Jo Comerford	SEN	617-722-1532	Jo.Comerford@masenate.gov
Mindy Domb	REP	617-722-2425	Mindy.Domb@mahouse.gov
Lindsay Sabadosa	REP	617-722-2460	lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gov

Dan Carey	REP	617-722-2060	dan.carey@mahouse.gov
Natalie Blais	REP	617-722-2400	natalie.blais@mahouse.gov
PaulMark	REP	617-722-2304	paul.mark@mahouse.gov

Please email Amherst Town Council if you're an Amherst resident:
towncouncil@amherstma.gov

The urgent message is this:

- Tell the administration to slow down. Cuts are not necessary at this moment.
- Bargain in good faith with the unions. Listen to their cost-savings proposals.
- We can't spare staff. They are essential to our research, teaching, and students' experience. There is enough work for everyone, including deferred maintenance and deep retrofitting to improve the campus's carbon footprint and sustainability.
- Tell UMass to take advantage of state programs including WorkShare, which allows staff to keep their jobs (part-time) while saving the university money.
- Layoffs are harmful to the regional economy. UMass economists have shown that every 100 layoffs mean 140 jobs lost in the Amherst area.
- The legislature should guarantee that the state budget for higher ed will remain level-funded for the rest of the fiscal year – as it is until November – and take the pressure off the campus.

2. Join with faculty and staff from colleges and universities across Massachusetts on Tuesday at 4:30 pm for a higher ed meeting. Register for the meeting here:
<https://www.mobilize.us/massteacher/event/320571/>

3. Contribute to the Solidarity Fund through the UMass Mutual Aid Network:
<https://sites.google.com/view/umass-mutual-aid-network/home>. 100% of funds will go directly to furloughed or laid-off staff in the form of groceries or Stop & Shop gift cards. Please donate what you can.

It is inspiring to see such strong support for staff in the face of harmful administrative decisions. We are stronger together.

In solidarity,
MSP Executive Committee

Allunit mailing list
Allunit@external.umass.edu
<https://list.umass.edu/mailman/listinfo/allunit>