

Dear colleagues,

We've heard a lot of questions about Chancellor Subbaswamy's [email regarding fall reopening](#). Our perspective is that the primary audience for this communication was students and their parents who must make decisions about the fall in the coming week. We understand the administration's concern about student enrollment numbers. At the same time, we want to assure MSP members that any decisions that affect our working conditions must be negotiated with the union, and we are actively engaged in that process now. These issues include:

### **1. Onsite vs. Remote Teaching**

We are negotiating now about who decides what teaching is online or in-person, and what workload accommodations would apply. The chancellor's message that all employees are to be considered onsite this fall would in fact be illegal under current state regulations that require only 50 percent [office occupancy](#), and encourage employers to "have workers continue to telework if feasible." We don't know what the state will mandate in September. Working conditions are fundamental, mandatory subjects of bargaining. The Chancellor's email does *\*not\** change any remote and flexible working arrangements for librarians that exist in the MSP contract.

### **2. Flexible work for librarians**

Librarians have the right to request flexible work arrangements; nothing in the Chancellor's email changes that. Last year, the MSP and administration agreed to improve Article 20 in the MSP contract, to allow librarians to make flexible work arrangements upon agreement with the department head. The contract says that such requests "shall not be unreasonably denied." Once we know more about conditions in the fall, MSP will work with librarians to make sure that this language is implemented.

### **3. Accommodations**

We have heard from members with concerns about their own health conditions that make vaccinations unsafe or that could make it dangerous to be on campus in the fall depending on the circumstances of the pandemic. Rest assured that we will make sure there are accommodations in place for any faculty or librarians in this situation. MSP has proposed continuing the provision of the one-year agreement that says that anyone who is unable to safely be on campus, or whose childcare/school is unavailable because of the pandemic, will have a safe and workable alternative.

### **4. Health and Safety**

Health and safety are also mandatory subjects of bargaining, and the unions are asking for information about ventilation and air quality, student COVID testing requirements, and more. We will also talk about maximum class sizes and the possibility that large lecture classes may be online. We'll keep you informed as these discussions continue.

## 5. Funding Details

MSP was disappointed with the Chancellor's discussion of the university's finances:

- The administration talks about COVID-related costs over the past year, but completely ignores major cost savings, including the staff furloughs and VSIPs and hiring freezes—which have increased the workloads of all remaining staff and faculty.
- The \$25 million going to students in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)/ Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) III will free up \$25 million that was already budgeted to student aid, allowing the previously allocated \$25 million to be used for institutional needs, including staffing. Combined with the \$25 million from this package that is allocated to institutional needs, we have \$50 million new funds that should be used to support our students and provide full staffing.
- We disagree with the excess HEERF money going into a “Contingency Reserve Fund,” to be used however administrators see fit. Current UMass system-level reserve funds of \$400 million have not been used this year, and the trustees have speculated that they are only useful if an asteroid hits campus. Federal funds should be used to fully staff the campus, to support faculty and staff, and to meet students' needs.

MSP was back at the bargaining table today. We reiterated our commitment to the priorities of faculty governance around curriculum/modality of teaching, and accommodations for faculty/librarians who need them. We also put our salary proposal on the table, in collaboration with the other UMass faculty/staff unions across the UMass campuses. You can see our bargaining principles here:

[https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1269/2021\\_msp\\_bargaining\\_principles.pdf](https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1269/2021_msp_bargaining_principles.pdf)

Join us for the MSP General Assembly next Thursday 4/29 for discussion about all of these topics and more! [RSVP](#) to receive the Zoom link.

In Solidarity,  
Your MSP bargaining team