

**Subject:** MSP updates and Groundhog Day  
**From:** MSP <msp@umass.edu>  
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**To:** All Unit Email List <allunit@groups.umass.edu>

Happy 2022! We write with information about how to navigate teaching given the current state of the pandemic, an update from the bargaining table, and an invitation to stand in solidarity with the other campus unions and demand good contracts for all.

First, some information about what to do if you, or your students, become ill during the semester:

- Faculty are NOT required to convert in-person classes to hybrid offerings. The Provost's email of January 19th encourages you to accommodate students who are absent, but it correctly does not say that this accommodation requires hybrid or multi-modal instruction. The campus communicated to students that, just like last semester, this is a fully in-person semester. As always, we are asked to make medical accommodations where necessary, but that does not mean that we have to allow students to zoom in or livestream -- it can mean giving them reading to do, or videos to watch, or a paper to write, or recording your lectures -- it is up to the instructor. Students should not be penalized for missing a class (we don't want to incentivize sick students to show up!), but faculty can determine how they can make up the work, and set reasonable limits on unexcused absences.
- If you cannot teach because you are ill, or you have to care for an ill family member, or your child care or children's school has a Covid-related closure, then you have the right to take sick leave, as always. If it's less than a week, you can simply cancel class and let your chair know you're ill. If it's more than a week, you are eligible to apply for sick leave for your own illness or for a family member's. As the Provost's message notes, when circumstances permit, you can move the class to Zoom temporarily. Whatever you end up doing, it is important to keep the students informed about how and when class is meeting (or not).

Second, a bargaining update. Your bargaining team has continued to work on negotiating a successor contract throughout the break, and as the new semester begins we are happy to report that we have made some progress.

- We have presented all of our proposals, and made a strong and persuasive case for how they will improve equity and excellence on our campus. Especially notable was our bargaining session on December 15th featuring the powerful testimony of fifteen non-tenure-track faculty members. In response to the administration's proposals for NTT faculty (which include extending the probationary period before Continuing Appointment), current NTT faculty spoke movingly about the vital work they do for our campus, and about how the administration's proposals would negatively impact our work. MSP's position is that NTT faculty need better working conditions; we remain puzzled as to why the administration wants to take protections away from such a valuable group of employees.
- Now that everything is on the table we are strategizing about what we can win in this contract. To that end we have put our proposals into "packages" which bundle our proposals (or modified versions) with administration proposals we feel we can accept.
- MSP has been clear that we cannot agree to the administration's three top priorities, which are:
  - 1) Making it harder for NTT faculty to achieve Continuing Appointment (lengthening the probationary period from three to four years of FTE service, and putting in place an extensive review process);
  - 2) Moving the start of the semester to August, and giving up MSP's right to negotiate our period of responsibility, and;

3) Making all faculty and librarians mandatory reporters under Title IX (an issue that MSP already fought four years ago and won).

- Despite these differences, we are close to settling on many other issues, and we hope to finish a contract in the next couple of months. But we're not going to settle unless we get some significant movement on financial issues that matter to faculty and librarians. In addition to the across-the-board raises of 2.5%/2%/2% detailed in the Governor's parameters (and communicated to the campus by the Chancellor on 7/21/21), our financial priorities include: a merit pool on top of across-the-board raises, increasing the pay equity pool, increasing salary floors and promotional increments, and retroactive raises back to July 1, 2020.

Throughout bargaining we have been guided by key principles grounded in what is good for the entire university. These include achieving race and gender equity, and supporting excellent research and teaching. Unfortunately, the administration is still claiming austerity and trying to roll back rights that we've already negotiated. After two years of sacrifice and increased workloads on campus (not to mention the millions of dollars in stimulus money flowing into campus, and billions in surplus at the state level), this is not the time for penny-pinching and take-backs.

If you agree, please come to the rally on **Groundhog Day, Wednesday, February 2, 2022, 12 PM – 12:30 PM, UMass Student Union Steps**, to stand in solidarity with UMass Unions United in our unified fight for a fair contract and healthy workplace! Come get your free union mask and support these demands for a Healthy Workplace:

1. **Safe and healthy working/learning conditions for all employees and students**, including Covid safety, healthy buildings, and good ventilation systems
2. **A campus designed for a healthy planet**; improving energy efficiency, renovating and retrofitting buildings to achieve net-zero carbon emissions
3. **A culture of dignity and respect** that provides a healthy work environment for all staff members
4. **Respect for our unions – Settle Good Contracts Now!**

In solidarity,

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