

MSP Chronicle

The Massachusetts Society of Professors | Representing Faculty & Librarians on the UMass Amherst Campus



From the Presidents' Desks

By Eve Weinbaum and Marc Liberatore, MSP Co-Presidents



Welcome (back) to UMass! The last two academic years have been full of challenges, crises, and unexpected transformations. We are proud of the role the MSP has played in supporting faculty and librarians – as well as our students and the university as a whole. We've worked very hard to stay in constant communication to keep our members informed, to advocate for individual faculty and librarians who have faced significant hardships, and to negotiate policies and processes that enhance equity and expand our capacity for outstanding research and teaching.

We learned this past year that the role of MSP President had grown too large for one person to sustainably manage, while also teaching and pursuing professional activities. With the enthusiastic approval of the Executive Board, we moved to a rotating structure that allows us to bring forward new leadership while providing continuity and mentorship. This spring, MSP members elected two co-presidents – Eve Weinbaum, Associate Professor of Labor Studies and Sociology, and Marc Liberatore, Senior Lecturer II in the College of Information and Computer

Sciences. Eve continues in her previous role as president, and Marc moves from vice president, faculty advocate, and member of the MSP bargaining team.

The MSP is a member-led organization, and the presidents are deeply involved in a wide range of activities, including workshops and trainings; bargaining and preparation of proposals and platforms; workplace troubleshooting and problem solving; committee meetings; contract enforcement; member support and grievance handling; legislative advocacy and testimony; coordinating with other union across the campus, UMass system, and state; and much more.

We have been blessed with an outstanding group of faculty and librarian leaders on the MSP Executive Committee and MSP Executive Board, as well as our MSP Department Reps who serve as direct liaisons with members. We are confident that the model of overlapping elected co-presidents will help to attract new leaders and ensure appropriate attention to all facets of the MSP's essential mission. We are always looking for new people to get involved – please consider taking on a bigger role with your union this year!

Last summer the MSP negotiated a one-year COVID agreement that kept our members safe and employed while meeting the campus's needs to provide high-quality remote instruction. In exchange for the heavy load of converting courses to an online modality while helping students navigate the challenges of the pandemic, most faculty were



granted future workload adjustments to allow them to catch up on research and other obligations. We held firm against pre-emptive furloughs and salary cuts, and we worked with the staff unions to fight against harsh austerity measures proposed by the administration.

We are now back at the bargaining table working on a successor contract. Our priorities include gender and race equity; raises and improvements to benefits; academic freedom and fair compensation for flexible learning; opening a teaching tenure track to give students access to permanent faculty and faculty access to meaningful security and benefits; full staffing equaling or exceeding pre-pandemic levels; and climate justice to improve the lives of the people of the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world. With the other UMass unions, we continue to demand transparency in accounting for the unprecedented amount of unrestricted money flowing to the campus under the various federal relief and stimulus programs. We are demanding that budget surpluses be spent on the educational mission of the university. And in the coming year we will work to pass

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Fighting Against Cuts: MSP Members Speak Out

By Jenny Adams, MSP Treasurer and Associate Professor, English Department

In December 2020, after it had furloughed the staff, the UMass administration turned to the MSP. Would we, the UMass faculty and librarians, take a one-time, 6% pay cut for the semester? Never mind that the university's projected deficit was less than 1% as shown in the graphic at right. Never mind that any furlough would be offset by a stimulus bill passing through Congress. Never mind that faculty had worked extra hours by moving their courses on-line. And never mind that librarians, already suffering from multiple job vacancies, had put in uncompensated overtime work to support the faculty's on-line teaching and research. Everyone else had sacrificed salary cuts. So, too, should faculty and librarians! Or so went the argument. We had one week to respond. What should we do?

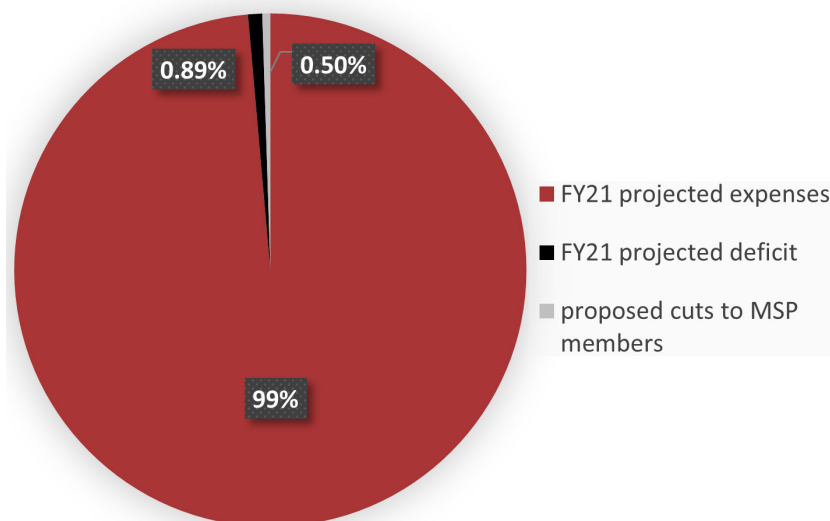
The MSP leadership did not see the need for more sacrifice. Our members had already sacrificed. Moreover, we hadn't really seen a need for anyone on campus to take a salary cut. The Board of Trustees had a substantial reserve fund. Our own campus had run at least a 30-million-dollar surplus for the previous four years. Why couldn't we tap into that money? At the same time, we did not want to seem churlish. Yes, we had sacrificed tons. We were exhausted. But maybe a 6% cut would be worth it to show our solidarity with staff who had endured furloughs and paycuts. So again, what should we do?

We could not make this decision alone. After all, we're a union, and we needed to know what everyone thought. So on December 11, 2020, we

held the largest Zoom meeting we'd ever had. Nearly 500 members came together as we presented the univer-

Google document. As you can see from selected quotes in the inset, most people did not want cuts. Sure, not everyone agreed. Even those who did agree did not come to the same conclusion for the same reasons. But when we read the chat transcript and every email that came in (all thirty-six pages of them) we felt we had to change our counterproposal. We told the administration that we would take no cuts, because that was what you asked us to do.

We are not done with hard decisions. We are not done with the pandemic's aftereffects. But we go into the next year grateful for you, our colleagues, who have taken time to be involved in collective decision-making, to listen to our arguments for our actions and then tell us what you are thinking. Most importantly, we will continue to listen, so please keep on talking. ■



The data for this graphic were current as of December 2020.

"Our response should be a hard NO."

"I'm not in favor of a hard no. But I do want them to slow down"

"We need to stay united and say no to a base salary pay cut."

"I am unequivocally against any salary cuts. As a BIPOC I personally have people who rely on me because certain communities have been even more adversely affected."

"I would totally accept a pay cut – but only if I could direct that cut to the staff. Sadly, I can't."

sity's proposed cuts. We presented a possible counterproposal: no immediate cuts, but let's wait and see. Maybe, if things became dire, we could offer some cuts. The Zoom chat blew up. Twenty-four hours later, the MSP email blew up. Your responses came, and kept coming, and coming, and coming...until they filled up a 36-page

(Presidents' Desk, continued)

the Fair Share amendment on the ballot, which will provide billions in new revenue for education and infrastructure.

Despite the hurdles we all faced during the past year, we

have found the MSP's work to be satisfying and important. As we continue to unite faculty and librarians around the issues that matter most to this great university, we need everyone to find a way to be involved. We look forward to working with you in the year to come. ■

Member Profile: Laura Quilter, Copyright and Information Policy Librarian

Editor's note: This chat occurred in February 2019 before the pandemic lockdowns started.

Chronicle: Tell me about your path to UMass.

Laura Quilter: I joined UMass in 2012. I was a spousal hire, actually, and the library at that point was happy to be expanding scholarly communication and copyright consultation. Many universities at that point were looking for ways to support faculty and grad students in their own programming to take advantage of the rights that educators have in copyright law. My field generally has moved from about a dozen lawyers in libraries now to about a hundred at major university libraries. Before I was a lawyer, I was a librarian, and as a librarian I became increasingly concerned with aspects of law that were starting to affect people's ability to access and share information. Aspects like the 1996 Telecommunications Reform Act, which consolidated media and censored the Internet; copyright law, which was expanding greatly during the 1990s; and patent and trademark law, which expanded in the nineties, made me concerned as a librarian about people's ability to create, produce and find information. So I went to law school and then began working on these issues from a legal perspective, often working with libraries. It was a natural move to work within scholarly communication in libraries.

C: Where were you a librarian?

LQ: I began working as a child in a public library, but as a professional librarian I worked with a Kentucky environmental agency and then the University of Illinois at Chicago. Then I moved to a science museum in San Francisco called the Exploratorium. This was my first job in a university library in scholarly communications, which was a fairly new field.

C: So what does a scholarly communications lawyer do?

LQ: Scholarly communication is the librarian's name for the field that looks at how people in universities, particularly, communicate and share their research and their teaching, what kinds of materials they create, and how the library collects it and organizes it. In particular we very often are here to support and even proselytize for open access and open education – openness, basically. Our role particularly is supportive of what faculty are trying to do and helping faculty to understand the tools available to them; sort of the new ways of tracking access and use of their research or their teaching materials and understanding the licensing issues around them.

I work mostly with faculty but sometimes also with graduate students, administrators, or other staff people on the campus around publishing contracts. I help them understand or negotiate their publishing contracts, helping people figure out what sorts of licensing options might be appropriate for them. If they are interested in commercializing, I just route them on over to tech transfer because the library is more about free and open content. I often work with faculty for whom their research projects involve copyright: they are



using third party materials in their teaching or their scholarship, they need a letter for a grant or for a publisher, they need to know how to make a fair use case to use some materials, they want help understanding how they can negotiate reasonable permissions, or they want help reclaiming their rights to their own materials.

C: Obviously you talk to faculty a lot. Is that what you do most of the time?

LQ: I spend anywhere from a third to half my time in individual consultations. The vast majority of those are with faculty and instructors, but certainly not all. Graduate students are a pretty decent chunk. Five College faculty or faculty from the other UMass campuses actually show up as well. Another pretty significant chunk is with the library or other university units who are trying to figure out what their policy should be. Questions like "Can we screen these films every Friday night?" or "Do we need a license for that?" are examples. Sometimes questions arise not so much about somebody's individual research, but rather just understanding what copyright law allows them to do. I also do policy interventions at a national level. For instance, we might write a comment about some new music copyright regulation and how the University can benefit from that. There is also lots of committee service and things of that nature. There is also a significant education program. That's about five things that I do for about a third of my time.

C: You mentioned other campuses and the Five Colleges. Do other campuses have somebody similar to you or are you it?

LQ: No, I'm it. Most liberal arts colleges and, indeed, most universities don't have a full-time copyright lawyer on staff. There are about a hundred of us now but we're still pretty special.

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Bargaining for Equity

By the MSP Contract Bargaining Team

When the MSP bargaining team (Eve Weinbaum, Marc Liberatore, Jacquie Kurland, Asha Nadkarni, Kate Zdepski, Mickey Gallagher, and Lori Reardon, with Heather LaPenn as chief negotiator) sat down with the administration in December 2019 we came with a series of proposals aimed at achieving greater racial and gender equity at UMass. This central theme, advanced in concert with issues developed by the bargaining support teams, defined our approach. Our weekly bargaining sessions started to produce results. Both teams were hopeful that for the first time in many years we would be able to settle contract negotiations before the current contract expired on June 30, 2020. But then in March the COVID-19 pandemic struck and campus closed. As the ravages of the pandemic exacerbated existing inequities, we realized even more viscerally the importance of racial and gender equity, and how far we are from achieving it.

As one remote semester drew to a close and another one loomed, the MSP and administration bargaining teams shifted gears to negotiate a one-year contract aimed at managing the various exigencies created by the pandemic. Again, equity issues framed

these negotiations as MSP and the administration found some common ground to address key problems such as the extra workload caused by the switch to high-quality online teaching, pandemic-related research delays, and increased child and elder care responsibilities. We reached what we felt was a groundbreaking agreement: faculty creating high-quality fully online courses received workload accommodations (in the form of sabbatical credits, time to continuous appointment for non-tenure track faculty, course releases, and financial compensation); pre-tenure faculty were granted automatic tenure year decision delays with retroactive promotional increases; and increased child and elder care funds were made available. While this agreement expires on June 30, 2021, the bargaining team spent the spring negotiating COVID-related provisions relating to continuing expanded child care, the elder care fund, research disruptions, and health and safety that will extend as long as the pandemic persists.

We now look forward to resuming mostly normal campus operations next year and have resumed bargaining our successor agreement. Shaped by the lessons we've learned from

the pandemic, we have returned to and modified our original proposals, continuing to advance our goal of achieving greater gender and racial equity for all of our members, with an eye to larger social justice issues. Proposals include those related to recruiting and retaining faculty and librarians from underrepresented groups, preventing and resolving salary anomalies, developing holistic evaluations of teaching, developing a teaching tenure track, ensuring that no inequities arise from online teaching, and achieving full staffing levels so that the number of faculty, librarian and staff are commensurate with workloads. We also have a series of proposals related to climate justice, including those pertaining to flexible work arrangements, transportation, facilities, and climate justice education. Importantly, we are working in coalition with the other campus unions on a number of these issues (full staffing, climate justice, salary, and paid holiday proposals) as they affect the campus at large.

While these proposals are ambitious, the pandemic has proven how necessary and feasible they are. ■

Report from the MTA

By Max Page, MTA Vice President and Professor, Department of Architecture

The struggle for expanded investment for public higher education is, as MSP members well know, a fight in which we have long been engaged. This past year in the face of threats of major cuts to public higher education during the pandemic we managed, with lots of member emails and calls and public actions (like we had in December in front of the Fine Arts Center), to win level-funding. The FY22 budget will be a little better than level-funded.

Several developments are falling into place for the possibility of major reinvestment. First, in mid-June (at a forum many of you attended) the MTA

announced that the Cherish Act now has been cosponsored by a majority of legislators in both the Massachusetts House and Senate. While this does not guarantee victory, it is an important milestone and gives us momentum to push for passage. Information about the Cherish Act, and all of the MTA's legislative agenda, can be found at massteacher.org/legislation.

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MSP librarians with MTA Vice President Max Page in his mortarboard during Lobby Day at the State House on March 2, 2020.

(Laura Quilter interview, continued)

C: That depends on the state doesn't it?

LQ: Some states are richer than others. Some universities have several copyright lawyers. My colleague at Harvard has a staff. My colleague at Penn State has a staff. My colleague at Michigan has a staff. For me it's just me. I am not the only one in Massachusetts. The other big ones are in the Boston area.

C: You mentioned education. There is some outreach there. What's that like? Do you do other things that involve public outreach?

LQ: I do a fair amount of outreach on campus, like lectures and faculty meetings. Off-campus I work within my larger community of copyright library attorneys to do programming. For instance, we did some programming last year for Public Domain Day which was the first time in 20 years that the public domain had reopened after a copyright term extension had lapsed. I work with local public libraries and local school libraries. My colleague Paulina Borrego, who is a science librarian here, assembled a public domain exhibition last year which is now on tour to local public libraries and I'm going to go speak at Leverett Public Library about that.

My upcoming sabbatical project will be looking more closely at ways of working with public libraries to provide services to the broader public because there are many creators in the broader public who, just like academics, need help in understanding how to protect their own rights, how not to be taken advantage of by publishers, how they can also make use of fair use, what is a Creative Commons license, and when should they use it. The focus is how to get that kind of programming to public libraries. This will be mostly within the region here, but I plan to do a little travel. Also I will do general copyright programming and educational programming in a "train the trainers: model for public schools and any kind of librarians through a variety of different organizations.

C: Your email tagline tells me that you support MSP. What kind of involvement have you had with MSP and our parent MTA?

LQ: Actually, not so much. I am working currently with the fabulous Joya Misra on the Race and Gender Equity Committee looking at issues for the next contract negotiations and

some things of that nature, helping out on committees in smaller ways. I haven't done a lot of other organizing within MSP.

C: Were you in another union before you joined MSP?

LQ: At the Exploratorium we had organized as SEIU but it wasn't an extremely active union shop and almost everybody was in it, so it was a one-off. All my other jobs, because I've been in an academic librarianship, we typically are not unionized so it was a real breath of fresh air to come here and be unionized – this was really exciting.

C: The MSP from its start had both librarians and faculty in its unit, which has helped to get librarians the professional recognition that they deserve.

LQ: There's definitely a sense of empowerment here which is really wonderful. Many libraries are run purely administratively, and it is nice to have some self-governance with which to push back. That's very helpful.

C: If you could make one change at the University, what change would it be?

LQ: I don't think I could only pick one – there are many. Actually, though, I was thinking about that and today I like that question. I first started going to sort of a black, negative, crabby path because, to be frank, I'm kind of crabby these days about a lot of things. But then I thought "You know, actually, I have an upcoming sabbatical and I've been reflecting on that and the opportunities it presents. There are people in the library who are extremely dedicated, very thoughtful, very creative and innovative who don't have sabbaticals and how much benefit they individually and the university collectively would get if more people had sabbaticals." Not only would they recharge emotionally and psychologically and feel more benefited by, more partnered by, and more cared for by the University, but also they would come back with ideas and innovation. I'm so lucky to be an MSP member as a librarian who gets a sabbatical. There are so many colleagues here at the library and throughout the campus who are working very hard, really dedicating themselves to our students or making a public university run effectively such as implementing some crazy technology or dealing with privacy and who could benefit from having some unstructured time to figure out how to tackle some challenge. If everyone got a sabbatical who knows all the different kinds of things they would come up with to make our lives better! ■

(Report from the MTA, continued)

Second, the Fair Share Amendment – the surtax on multi-millionaires that will generate upwards of \$2 billion every year dedicated to PreK-16 public education and public transportation – cleared the constitutional convention (both houses of the legislature) on June 9 with a 159-41 vote. This means that, finally, the Fair Share Amendment will come up for a vote of the people on the November 2022 ballot. While the general public strongly supports the

proposal – it gets thumbs up above 70% in several public polls – it will be a big fight, as the millionaires and billionaires have more millions and billions than they have ever had, with the inflation of their greed matching the growth in their wealth. Every MSP member should sign the electronic pledge to get involved this coming year at www.raiseupma.org/fair-share-amendment-2022/.

Finally, the last federal pandemic bill, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), included hundreds of millions of dollars that went directly to higher ed

campuses – the so-called HEERF funds. But the state is also receiving \$5.3 billion that can be used for virtually anything, including public higher education. After listening to members in a variety of spaces, including the Annual Meeting, MTA put forward a series of proposals to the legislature, most of which center on investing in public higher education. We are pushing hard for some of the funding to be released this summer to help campuses as students and faculty resume their work in person. ■

The Mutual Aid Network

By Emily Hamilton, Assistant Professor, History Department

The UMass Amherst Mutual Aid Network, launched in Fall 2020, emerged out of conversations among members of the UMass All-Union Environmental Health and Safety Committee. Along with considering safe reopening strategies and the physical protection of employees during the pandemic, this committee focused on overall workplace support for employees. Particularly as the number of furloughed and laid-off employees rose, there was a growing interest in providing tangible support for those members of our community most impacted by Covid. From these conversations, the Mutual Aid Network was developed as an MSP initiative to provide financial support to any UMass union member facing financial hardship due to pandemic-related furloughs, increased dependent-care costs, reduced work hours, or other situations impacting their financial situation.

The Mutual Aid Network solicited donations primarily from the UMass community, for the UMass community, and all interested union members were encouraged to request funding through a simple application process. The generosity of our donors was tribute to the spirit of solidarity embraced by so many during the shared experience of navigating a global pandemic. In total, the Mutual Aid Network raised over \$52,000, all of which was distributed in the form of grocery store gift cards to 322 households over four rounds of distribution. Although the program was suspended in Spring 2021 as the majority of furloughed workers were reinstated, the Mutual Aid Network continues to be one of the proudest accomplishments of the MSP in its continuing work to support not just its own members, but also the other unions on campus that represent UMass employees. ■

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Last year, the MSP and other campus unions organized a car caravan rally to protest staff furloughs and layoffs. Emily, from the MSP office, reported that this was Camila's first demonstration. (From the Daily Hampshire Gazette.)

THE MSP PUZZLE

The puzzle from the last issue was to unscramble a cryptoquote. The unscrambled answer was "When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him: 'Whose?'" ~ Don Marquis". The winner was Marty N. This issue's puzzle is a word Sudoku. It's like regular numerical Sudoku except that the numbers 1-9 are replaced by the letters A, B, D, E, L, O, R, S and U. Each 3 by 3 box must contain only 1 of each of the 9 letters, and all columns and all rows must also contain only 1 of each of the letters. When you complete the puzzle, a 5-word phrase will be revealed that describes how the MSP contract bargaining team feels when the last negotiation session finishes. The first reader to submit the five-word phrase by September 1, 2021 will win a gift certificate to Amherst Books. Send your entry to MSPpuzzle@gmail.com. Open to MSP members. Decision of the judge is final. You can't win unless you enter!

The TEval Project

By Gabriela Weaver, Professor, Chemistry Department, and Assistant Dean for Student Success Analytics

A professor returned from sabbatical inspired to revise her course with new content and more student engagement. She spent the summer revising the syllabus, selecting new course materials, and developing interesting assignments that she believed would help students make the important connections among the subtopics of the course and follow the throughline of reasoning in the discipline. She enjoyed teaching the course to her students the following semester, but was discouraged by their lack of interest. In spite of this, she found that her students gave much deeper responses in their exams and assignments than she had seen in the past. She felt the effort had been worth it and the revision had been a success! Why, then, did her SRTI scores decrease and why did she receive so many negative comments about the course being too difficult?

Unfortunately, this story is much too common. The end-of-semester surveys on which the quality of faculty teaching is evaluated have little (if any) connection to the extent of learning that is taking place. In addition, numerous research studies around the country have demonstrated that these types of surveys show bias against instructors of certain identities.

And, yet, there are ways to teach that are supported by educational research as being more inclusive and more effective for learning that our institution encourages and that many faculty would like to use. Using these methods is the right thing to do if we really believe that our mission is to educate all of our students in the best ways possible. For these reasons, a cohort of departments has been engaged in a federally funded project to develop a better, more holistic approach to evaluate teaching. UMass Amherst is one of four universities engaged in this

collaborative project, partnering with the University of Colorado, Boulder, the University of Kansas, and Michigan State University, with external evaluation carried out by a researcher from Yale University.

The project is called TEval (www.teval.net)



UMass team participants actively working on assembling a timeline of goals using post-it notes at the TEval Knowledge Exchange with other campus teams in Charlotte, NC in February 2019.

and at UMass it involves nine departments: Physics, Information and Computer Sciences, Linguistics, Environmental Conservation, Music and Dance, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, Nutrition, and Art. The core team of each department includes the department Head or Chair and a group of faculty, both lecturers and tenure stream, but the project involves the department as a whole. At the present stage the work is exploratory – finding out what is feasible and desirable in different types of departments. Nonetheless, a working evaluation instrument specific to UMass now exists (for piloting purposes) and it is based on a common framework being used at all of the institutions in this collaborative project,

a framework that draws on 25 years of work on the evaluation of teaching.

The basic idea is that multiple aspects of teaching (“dimensions”) should be evaluated in order to capture the teaching endeavor in its totality, including aspects that take place

outside of the classroom and that go beyond the teaching of individual courses. The framework also specifies that multiple types of perspectives should be represented in the evaluation (“lenses”) including from the instructor themselves, course materials, students, and third parties (such as other members of the department or outside experts). The instrument purposely leaves the decisions on most of

the specifics up to each department so that the approach can be customized to that discipline and its departmental culture. But it also provides a consistent approach so that this sort of evaluation could ultimately be used in merit and promotion packets that would be compared across many departments. We hope that this process can be piloted by enough departments so that it can form the basis of a new, more representative and robust approach to the evaluation of teaching. The MSP bargaining team is negotiating around holistic teaching evaluation that links directly to the efforts of the TEval project (see the bargaining report on page 4).

For more information, see the project website (teval.net) or contact Gabriela Weaver (gweaver@umass.edu). ■

Photo credits this issue include Dave Gross, Gabriela Weaver, Eve Weinbaum, and UMass Amherst web site.



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