Dear Colleagues:

We write to update you on the work of an FSU committee working to negotiate a research leave for junior faculty, in a bargaining process mandated by Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 8 in our last contract. A team of junior faculty, along with the FSU president and MTA consultants, met with the Provost and her team several times this spring. We asserted the need for a genuine research sabbatical - one that includes time off from teaching and service, with no requirement to teach course overloads to "buy out" one's time and earn the semester off. The administration rejected this demand. However, the administration provided a list of current "research intensive semester" policies across UMB's colleges and schools, noting that one department, Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), does not have a research intensive semester for all faculty. The administration expressed a willingness to entertain providing a research intensive semester for C&I. (A full description of our negotiations, and of current research intensive semester policies, is appended below.)

While we are glad that the working conditions of junior faculty in CEHD will likely be improved as a result of the bargaining process, we are determined to continue to push for a real junior faculty sabbatical, as UMass Lowell and several peer institutions currently enjoy. The committee is committed to making this a core demand in the bargaining of our next contract, when bargaining begins in Fall 2019.

We invite all faculty to participate in the efforts to secure a pre-tenure sabbatical at UMass Boston. Our best strategy is to collectively demonstrate our need to have a real research leave and our determination to obtain it. Faculty can help develop strategies and policies, talk to colleagues, do research – and attend meetings with the administration as part of our new open bargaining policy. Although the junior faculty sabbatical is most directly relevant to junior, tenure-track faculty, we encourage participation by tenured faculty, whose voices carry substantial weight with the administration, and who are able to reflect on the effects on not having access to a sabbatical pre-tenure. Please contact fsu@umb.edu with ideas, concerns, proposals, and suggestions. Every member’s contribution is needed to improve the resources, research, and tenure prospects for the hard working faculty of UMass Boston.

Sincerely,

The RIS Committee (Sarah Mayorga Gallo, Sofya Aptekar, Joseph Brown, Meghan Kallman, Michelle Jurkovich)
Marlene Kim, FSU President
MTA Consultants (Mickey Gallagher and Heather LaPenn)

Bargaining process and research intensive semester policies:

The research intensive semester (RIS) committee met with the administration several times. We asserted that current RIS policies at UMass Boston do not constitute a genuine junior faculty sabbatical, as UMass Lowell enjoys, and which several of UMass Boston's peer institutions enjoy. Faculty should not be required to teach overloads to "earn" the RIS, nor should they have to perform service during their semester off from teaching. These requirements negate much of the benefit of a semester off from teaching. Further, we contend that a junior faculty sabbatical is essential to making UMass Boston a first
rate public research university, like the other schools in the UMass system.

The administration rejected our argument on the grounds that MOU 8 does not require them to bargain for new items, beyond ensuring that a “Research Intensive Semester” (by their definition, including service and the need to buy out one’s own time) is available to faculty in all colleges and schools. The administration maintained that the only college that does not already have an RIS is Curriculum and Instruction (C&I), although they initially claimed that C&I does have such a policy.

We responded with a proposal to clarify C&I’s and the College of Management’s policies on paper, such that they receive a total of 14 course releases during a faculty member’s six year junior contract. We believe that this improvement over C&I's current practices will set the stage for future bargaining for a no-overload/no-service junior faculty research leave in the next contract.

We are including a list of current RIS policies at UMass Boston, college-by-college (see attached). Note that these policies vary considerably, with some colleges receiving substantially poorer provisions. No college receives a genuine junior faculty sabbatical. We invite our members (untenured and tenured faculty) to join us in bargaining for a true junior faculty sabbatical in the next round of bargaining, which begins in Fall 2019.

For information on the FSU, links to our contract and bargaining updates, and a calendar of events, see the FSU webpage

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