Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the Faculty Staff Union, I am pleased to welcome you to UMass Boston and to invite you to become an active member in the union.

The FSU and our affiliate chapter on the Amherst campus, the Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP), serve as the exclusive bargaining agent for the over 2,300 university faculty and librarians on the two campuses. Not all universities have unions, but like many, ours was established in a period of hard times. In the 1970s we suffered through frozen salaries, deteriorating working conditions, and problematic administrators. So on February 12, 1976, an overwhelming majority of the faculty and librarians on the Amherst and Boston campuses voted to unionize.

Through our collective bargaining agreement, we have sought to protect and enhance the economic position and professional rights of all faculty and librarians. The FSU has played a major role in a number of important victories on behalf of our members. For example, in the 2009-2012 contract, we secured “gap” health insurance for new tenure-track faculty, for the 60-day waiting period required by the Group Insurance Commission. In the 2007-2008 contract, the FSU won what might be the best parental leave policy in the country: any tenure-track faculty member, full-time lecturer with 3 years of service, and full-time librarian is entitled to a semester off at full pay when s/he welcomes a new child to the home through birth or adoption. We have also improved our family-friendly policies by gaining the right to the use of our “sick leave bank” for purposes of not only covering extended illness for you, but attending to a family member as defined under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FSU has also won significant wage increases for our members in our previous and current contracts despite the harsh economic climate (the raises were 10% on average). Furthermore, the new contract continues to add to the unprecedented gains for non-tenure track faculty we have won, including benefits, across-the-board pay raises, increased job security, and expanded promotional opportunities.

The FSU is affiliated with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) on the state level and the National Education Association (NEA) on the national level. The MTA provides us with numerous services and a consultant, Michelle Gallagher, who works full-time with the Boston and Amherst faculty and librarians. The MTA also acts as our advocate and watchdog on Beacon Hill, keeps us posted on what the legislature and Governor are planning, and lobbies continually on our behalf. For example, the FSU and the MTA played a crucial role in defeating a recent initiative on the ballot to eliminate the Massachusetts personal income tax which would have had a devastating impact on public higher education in the state.
Approximately 90% of UMass Boston faculty and librarians are members of the FSU. Under Massachusetts law, the FSU represents all members of the bargaining unit in regards to collective bargaining rights, regardless of their membership status. In turn, state law requires all bargaining unit members to either become dues-paying members of the FSU or pay an agency service fee for basic services rendered. In addition to the representation available to all members of the bargaining unit, union membership entitles you to access to a wide range of MTA and NEA services. Moreover, because the FSU is an open and democratic organization, participation in its activities will be readily open to you. For more on the benefits of FSU membership versus agency fee, please see the attached table.

Most faculty members choose to become dues paying union members rather than agency service fee payers because they support the work of the union. They recognize that it plays a vital role in the life of the university and that the more members we have the more leverage we have at the bargaining table and the State House.

When you join the FSU, you have a voice in union affairs, in electing officers, and in creating policy. You also have the benefit of free legal counsel regarding employment issues not directly covered by the collective bargaining agreement and $1 million liability insurance for employment-related incidents. And through our state and national affiliations, you will be offered a wide range of low-cost insurance programs, travel discounts, financial planning and buying services.

I hope that you will become a member of the FSU, and that you will become an active participant in our union. Our membership coordinator/internal organizer, Lorenzo Nencioli, will be helping to facilitate member involvement and raise awareness of the role of our union in the life of our university. You’ll be hearing from him before long about how you might want to become involved in charting the path of the FSU. Remember, this is your union, and its effectiveness and visibility in the affairs of UMass Boston and in public higher education as a whole depends on your participation.

Furthermore, contractually, in reviewing faculty performance, union service counts as University service. Believe me, we can use your involvement, and the FSU, in turn, can help you in your career at UMass Boston.

The 2015-2016 academic year dues are $904 per full-time member of which $230 supports the FSU, $489 supports the MTA, and $185 supports the NEA. While we do not yet know the exact amount of the agency service fee to be paid by people who choose not to join the union, we estimate that it will be $578 The overwhelming majority of our members elect automatic monthly deductions from payroll as their preferred means of satisfying their dues obligation. Dues paid in this fashion are made over a ten-month period, September through June.

A payroll deduction form is included in this packet. I hope you will return it to us as soon as possible to the Faculty Staff Union, Rm. 81C, 2nd Floor Quinn Bldg (keep in mind that deductions cannot begin until the membership form is returned). In addition to
the deduction form, this packet also includes a letter of introduction from the MTA, information on the difference between the agency service fee and union dues, an important note on retirement and health/dental insurance matters, and a copy of the last FSU newsletter. You can also get more information on the union, including a copy of the current collective bargaining agreement, a list of FSU officers, and the FSU bylaws, at our website: www.fsu.umb.edu or at our Facebook page (look for ‘UMass Boston Faculty Staff Union’).

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact FSU Membership Coordinator Lorenzo Nencioli at 617-287-6295 or by e-mail at fsu@umb.edu. Also, you may contact me directly: 617-287-6954 or marlene.kim@umb.edu.

Again, welcome to our campus and please accept my best wishes for a rewarding and productive semester ahead.

Cordially,

Marlene Kim

President
Faculty Staff Union