

Candidates for FSU Executive Committee, Spring 2025 Election

The following individuals have submitted the required paperwork to be a candidate for a position on the FSU Executive Committee. Below is each candidate, their title, and a 150-word statement.

Vice President – Vote for one

Jason Rodriguez, Associate Professor. Sociology.

I have been an active member in the Faculty Staff Union since I joined UMass Boston in 2015, having served on the FSU Executive Committee representing pre-tenure faculty and on the Core Bargaining Team three times, once as Chair and currently as Co-Chair. I am proud of the work the FSU has done to improve working conditions for faculty and librarians, but there is much more work to be done. With my deep knowledge of the contract and of the issues we face as faculty and librarians on campus, I am well-positioned to do the member services that is the bread-and-butter work of the FSU. More broadly, the FSU has a responsibility to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the other unions on campus, in solidarity, to protect the fundamental rights of workers and the core values of public higher education.

Non-Tenure Track Faculty – Vote for two

Keith Robert Jones, Lecturer. Africana Studies.

Over the past 5 years, I have had the honor of serving as an NTT representative on a number of campus-wide committees, and I currently serve on the union's core bargaining team. In all union activity, my priority has been to center equity for all members and to insist upon the co-building of a campus culture that prioritizes, as Dr. King once said, "the dignity of all labor." I believe that a strong union must focus on bread-and-butter issues as well as build support around a shared vision in which bargaining for the common good inspires broader solidarity and greater participation. Given the stresses and hardships so many of us increasingly face, especially NTT faculty, we need to continue to grow our commitment to solidarity across our various identities and sites of struggle to build greater unity. I am especially concerned about the university's exploitation of the associate lecture category.

Lynne Byall Benson, Senior Lecturer. Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies.

I have served on the FSU Executive Committee since Fall 2021. In addition, I have represented the FSU on the committee to reopen the UDC, and have served on the FSU Communications Committee, and FSU Elections Committee.

As an NTT faculty member, I understand how vitally important it is for NTTs to be represented and supported on the UMB campus. NTTs carry out most of the teaching responsibilities as well as perform service on behalf of our students and respective departments. We are now in a crisis of uncertainty in higher education, and it is therefore more important than ever that NTTs have representation in our union to assert and protect our rights as respected and contributing members of the UMass Boston academic community. My years of experience qualify me to continue representing these interests of NTTs at UMass Boston.

Tenured Faculty – Vote for two

Rita Kiki Edozie, Professor. Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance.

For twenty-five years, I've been a passionate advocate for academic governance and faculty leadership at various universities- public and private. I've held non-tenure track, tenure-track, tenured, and academic administrative positions at these universities. Recently coming out of a long-term administrative role at UMass Boston since 2017, as I assume an active faculty role, I would love to refocus my time and contribute my service to faculty administration, faculty leadership, and especially shared governance at UMB. I admire the activities and mission of the university's faculty-run institutions – FSU and FC – and believe that my passion, experience and credentials will positively contribute to “being part of the change” as we face critical junctures!

Andrés Fabián Henao Castro, Associate Professor. Political Science.

I have been an active member of the FSU since I joined UMB in 2014, and already served in the Executive Committee as a pre-Tenure representative between 2015 and 2017. Since then, I have always advocated for a more democratic and participatory union, committed to open bargaining, clear and frequent communication of its policies and deliberations to its members, and with an intersectional view of labor issues that includes a more holistic understanding of the material conditions under which we are structurally compelled to do our work. My experience last year, while supporting the union as a member of the Contract Action Team, has convinced me that the democratic empowerment of our members is the best response that we have, to guarantee the public mission, autonomy, and shared governance of our university.

Patricia Krueger-Henney, Associate Professor. Leadership in Education.

I am currently finishing my first term as a tenured faculty representative on the FSU Executive Committee (Ex Com). During the past year and a half, and in tight collaboration with my colleagues on the Ex Com, I have suggested, informed, or actively contributed to the implementation of justice-centered FSU activities and actions. More than ever does the union need to bring the increasingly precarious working and learning conditions of our staff, students, and faculty to our university administration's attention! Whether through working in the classroom, prioritizing cross-union collaborations, or leading community-led initiatives in the larger Boston area, I mindfully and principally build critical spaces of mutual care, facilitate ethical collaborations, and engage in participatory action with students and colleagues. My commitments are solidly grounded in years of experience with building cross-community solidarity, organizing to center equity and justice for all, and practicing institutional transparency and shared governance.

Brian White, Associate Professor. Biology.

Since 1997, I have taught large and small classes to a wide range of students. From my students, I have learned about their lives, their aspirations, and the daily struggles they go through to pursue an education. I have worked with colleagues to develop their skills as teachers; through this, I have seen their outstanding commitment to educating our students and the wide range of environments where they teach. On sabbatical, I have seen how different universities are structured and experienced the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches. I have also served as Associate Provost for two years where I came to understand how and why the university administration operates as it does. I am now back in the classroom and I hope to use what I have learned to help faculty and staff to do our best for our students and to thrive at UMass Boston.

Pre-Tenure Faculty – Vote for one

Méridith Laferté-Coutu, Assistant Professor. Philosophy.

Joining the FSU executive committee would be an opportunity for me to do my part in fighting for all union members to obtain better working conditions and to build a more communal, solidary work environment at UMass Boston. Being a unionized scholar in the United States is a privilege I do not take for granted, and I want to contribute to strengthening and asserting our collective power as a community through bargaining and activation of our base. I have years of experience as a tenant organizer and as a graduate student fighting for unionization. I want to get to know my colleagues better, learn about their experience at UMass Boston, and take concrete action in response to their concerns. As a pre-tenure faculty member, I am new to this university. But I am committed to making it feel like home—for myself and others.