

Union News

• FROM THE FACULTY STAFF UNION •

Stronger Together: Unions and Students Ally to Fight Higher Fees



UMASS BOSTON FACULTY MEMBERS JOINED STUDENT GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES RECENTLY TO TALK ABOUT HOW TO FORMULATE PLANS BASED UPON SHARED INTERESTS.

BY JENNIFER BERKSHIRE, UNION NEWS EDITOR

The message delivered to UMass Board of Trustees on September 16 couldn't have been clear: fee increases are akin to "digging an ever-deeper well of student debt." But the messengers weren't just students. Instead, an alliance of students, faculty and staff, all working together to tell university administrators: "enough."

"We were blown away by the support," says Jillian Brelsford, president of the UMass Boston Student Nurses Association. Brelsford, who spoke to members of the Board of Trustees about the impact of rising fees on nursing students, says that she has high hopes that the alliance with faculty and staff will endure. "We have a lot to gain by partnering with faculty on campus finance issues, and if we grow this relationship, I think that students will

show up for faculty during the next contract campaign."

That's exactly what John Hess, a faculty member in the English department, wants to hear. Hess was part of a faculty brigade that attended a recent student government meeting in an effort, not just to forge an alliance, but to begin to think about how to formulate plans based on shared interests. "This was a way of breaking the ice and also talking about how can we achieve some of the things we have in common?"

Efforts to build an alliance between faculty and students aren't new. As Hess points out, the two first came together four years ago in a campaign aimed at winning more state funding for UMass. But the partnership really found its footing in the campus-wide fight over a proposed parking fee hike back in 2013. Soon after UMass administrators announced the plan to hike fees, campus unions and other groups formed the coalition known as STOP: Stand Together, Oppose the Parking Fee Increase!

"We have a lot to gain by partnering with faculty on campus finance issues, and if we grow this relationship, I think that students will show up for faculty during the next contract campaign."

Jillian Brelsford, president, UMass Boston Student Nurses Association.



This is a Seasonal Newsletter from the UMass Boston Faculty Staff Union.

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Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues:

I hope you are having a great semester. The FSU has been busy. Here is an update on some important issues:

Raises:

We finally received our retroactive pay in your last paycheck in October.

This should have included a 1.75% cost of living increase from July 1, 2014 to May 2, 2015, a 0.35% cost of living increase from January 2015 to May 2, 2015, and retroactive merit pay from January 2015 to June 2015. If you did not receive your retroactive pay, contact payroll and HR as well as the FSU.

- You received another 1.75% cost of living increase on July 1, 2015.
- You will be receiving another 0.35% cost of living increase in January 2016, and another 1.75% in July 2016.
- You will be receiving additional merit pay from a 1.45% pool in January 2016. (You received merit pay of the same pool amount in June 2015).

Despite these benefits, many of you are not members of the union. Your dues helped pay for the lobbying efforts to get your retroactive pay and stop your health care cost share from increasing (see page 4 of this newsletter). Those of you who are not members are receiving a letter from me shortly urging you to help us continue to help you by becoming a member.

Updates:

- The FSU, along with a coalition of organizations and unions, is working on the Fair Share Campaign, which will raise \$1.3 billion annually for public education and transportation. See the article on the next page for more on this.
- NTT promotions and contract conversion issues: Eligible NTTs have until December 14 to apply for Senior Lecturer or Senior Lecturer II (check the FSU website or contact the FSU office for prior updates on conversion issues as well as for more details on NTT promotions).
- We remain engaged with the Administration on a number of issues related to converting to the new contract, including counting years of service prior to 7/1/14 and the impact of delaying implementing this new contract on promotional criteria from the old contract. We'll keep members updated on the progress of these talks.
- The agency responsible for accreditation of higher education institutions, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission (NEASC), is reviewing and changing accreditation standards to the detriment of non-tenure track faculty. Equitable treatment and job security of NTTs would be reduced. Please sign the petition here <http://509.seiu.org/page/speakout/cihe-standards> to oppose these changes. For more information on these changes, please click here http://higherroadma.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/2011_2015_CIHE_Faculty_Standards_Compare.pdf
- 2:2 in CLA: The FSU will be sending you an electronic survey to help us evaluate the 2:2 in the College of Liberal Arts. Please fill this out when you receive it.

Got a problem, question, or want to help on any of these issues? Contact us. ■

Sincerely,
Marlene Kim
FSU President

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Please send letters to the editor, comments, questions and suggestions to the Faculty Staff Union.

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Photo credit page 1: Ira Kassiel

Photo credit page 3: Raise Up Massachusetts

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Fair Share: Taxing Massachusetts Millionaires to Fund Education and Transportation

BY SOFYA APTEKAR, SOCIOLOGY

Imagine having 1.3 billion dollars to fund education and transportation needs in Massachusetts, including higher education.

The Faculty Staff Union through the Massachusetts Teachers Association is working with a coalition of community groups across our state for a new amendment to the state constitution to raise these funds. This Fair Share Amendment would change the current flat state income tax of 5.15% by taxing those who earn more than \$1 million an extra 4%.

This amendment would specify that the additional revenue be spent on public education, including public higher education, public transportation, and transportation infrastructure and would raise \$1.3-\$1.4 billion per

Since the late 1970s, the incomes of the top 1% have grown ten times faster than those of the bottom 90%. Yet, Massachusetts is also one of only eight states where residents pay state taxes at the same rate, regardless of how much they make.

year. Massachusetts is one of the most economically unequal states in the country, and the gap between the top 1% and everyone else is quickly growing. Since the late 1970s, the incomes of the top 1% have grown ten times faster than those of the bottom 90%. Yet, Massachusetts is also one of only eight states where residents pay state taxes at the same rate, regardless of how much they make. With the Fair Share Amendment, Massachusetts would join a growing group of states with millionaire taxes, which includes New Jersey, California, New York, Connecticut, Maryland, Hawaii, Wisconsin, Oregon, and Minnesota. The new 9% tax rate would be one of the highest in the nation, but still behind California, which taxes at over 13%.



Should we be worried that a relatively high tax on millionaires will send high earners packing for greener pastures in other states? In fact, a widely validated analysis of millionaires in states that have millionaire taxes has shown that such fears are not substantiated, and the number of millionaires in these states actually continues to grow.

Because the wealthy in Massachusetts pay less in property and sales taxes, they actually pay only 6.4% of their income in taxes, compared to 9.4% for the bottom 99% of state residents. Even with the Fair Share amendment, the wealthy would still pay a smaller total share of their income in taxes than everyone else.

At a time of record-high inequality, when ordinary Massachusetts families are struggling to survive and public amenities face dire cuts, pushing for the Fair Share Amendment is a commonsense move. While progressive taxation schemes have failed to pass in the state in the past, most voters approve of these if these taxes target millionaires and the funds are earmarked for public education and transportation. A recent (non-representative) Boston Globe poll places the support for the amendment at 75 percent. ■

For more information on the Fair Share campaign, including how you can get involved, visit www.raiseupma.org or contact the FSU.

Why Be a Member of a Union?

MARLENE KIM, FSU PRESIDENT

What does the FSU do for you?

Nationally, union members have higher wages and greater benefits (especially pensions and health care). Many non-tenure track faculty across the country, for example, do not have health care benefits and access to the employer's pension plan, when they are not unionized.

Unions also reduce inequality within firms, mostly by raising the pay of those at the bottom. Long-time non-tenure track faculty at UMass, for example, have livable salaries as a result of our union contract.

But the most important benefit of having a union is that unions protect you from the unilateral authority of management, by having rules and contracts that address matters such as working conditions, work load and layoffs. Changes in working conditions must be negotiated and agreed to by the union. Management cannot simply impose these.

Most of all, unions provide a voice for workers. If there are problems with your working conditions, if your workload increases, if you are not treated right, you can complain and file a grievance, and the union can represent you and seek a remedy that meets your concerns.

Otherwise, without a union, if you complain about a problem, you can be fired. Without union protections, you are employed at the whim of the university and can be terminated if they don't like you or what you said.

Unions also give you equal power with management when bargaining or handling grievances. At a meeting to discuss your grievance, the union representative is equal to the university representative. Whatever the union says is protected, and the union representative cannot be fired for arguing for different working conditions or benefits or disagreeing with the university. Without a union, as an individual complaining, you can be fired. But with a union, the union's voice that expresses workers' concerns cannot be silenced. It must be listened to.

Legally, this gives unionized workers power, which delivers the higher wages and greater benefits for members.



Continued on page 7.

Unions Fight Health Insurance Increase

LORENZO NENCIOLI, FSU STAFF

On March 4, 2015 Governor Baker unveiled his proposal for a fiscal year 2016 state budget. Included in the budget was a proposed increase in the percentage split paid by state employees for health insurance premiums (employees hired before June 2003 pay 20% of the premiums with the state paying the rest; the proposal would have increased the share paid by all employees to 25%). For members on family plans, this change would have resulted in an annual premium increase of \$720 to \$1,200.

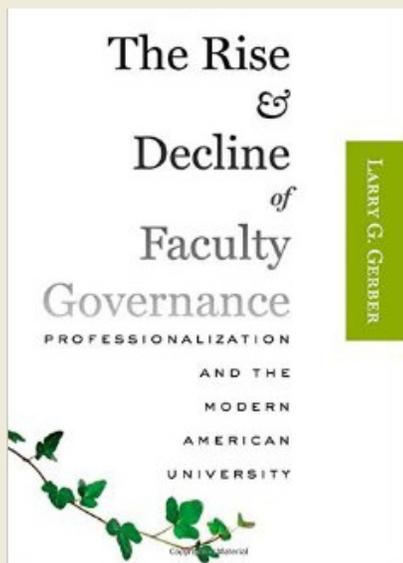
The reaction from state employee unions was swift. Unions organized immediately to encourage members to contact their senators and representatives and urge them not to further burden working families by shifting the costs of health insurance further away from the employer and onto their employees. The MTA in particular mobilized thousands of members to inundate the State House with phone calls and emails opposing the proposed premium increase. Barbara Madeloni, President of the MTA, spoke at an anti-health premium increase lobby day at the State House on April 2, 2015. She was joined by dozens of MTA members who came in person to deliver a message to their reps and senators- this proposal is unfair and must be opposed.

On July 17, 2016, Governor Baker signed the FY16 MA budget into law. One thing that was not in the budget: the proposed 5% increase in health insurance premiums to be paid by state employees. Continued on page 7.

What Ever Happened to Faculty Governance?

BY JENNIFER BERKSHIRE, UNION NEWS EDITOR

A provost vetoes a faculty hiring decision. Faculty are notified via memo that a program will now be housed in their department. A meeting of the Faculty Senate is dominated by administrators.



Taken individually, such instances—and the faculty who complain about them—could be seen as “much ado about nothing.” But each is an example of what might be called “administrative creep”: a steady of erosion of faculty decision making in an increasingly top-down climate in which administrators call the shots while keeping an eye on the bottom line.

Nor is this phenomenon unique to UMass Boston or the UMass system. In fact, as a new book documents, the tradition of shared governance on American university campuses is under siege across the country. In *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance*, Larry Gerber, professor emeritus of history at Auburn University, argues that the rise of adjunct faculty and corporate-style management threatens, not just shared governance, but the entire U.S. system of higher education.

“Key questions for the future are whether current challenges to the practice of shared governance will only intensify and whether such challenges will affect the quality and purpose of American higher education,” writes Gerber.

At UMass Boston, economics professor Julie Nelson has watched with dismay as faculty decision making has weakened on campus. A recent case in point: when she and other department members recently learned that a program was to be housed in the Economics Department,

the notification came via a memo from an administrator. “We were never consulted about this even though decisions about courses, programs and new schools are supposed to go through the faculty governance process.”

Or take the College of Advancing and Professional Studies, UMass Boston’s fast growing continuing education school. “It exists completely outside of the traditional faculty governance structure,” says Jonathan Chu, a history professor who sits on the Faculty Council. “Without any mechanism for faculty governance, there is really no one looking over the school’s shoulder.”

“Administrative creep”: a steady of erosion of faculty decision making in an increasingly top-down climate in which administrators call the shots while keeping an eye on the bottom line.

Nelson, Chu and others say that the solution to the weakening of faculty governance structure is obvious: strengthen such structures. And, thanks to a series of initiatives aimed at making the Faculty Council more responsive to the concerns of faculty members, there are encouraging signs that positive change is underway. Faculty Council Executive Committee member Heike Schotten points to a series of open meetings without any formal agenda (or any administrative presence) at which faculty can tell committee members about their concerns.

Schotten, who is a faculty member in the political science department, says that Faculty Council members also have high hopes that a new investigative committee tasked with looking into autonomy in the hiring process, will transform anecdotes into data. “Faculty have come to us to say that they feel they no longer have autonomy in hiring,” says Schotten.

Continued on page 8.



UMASS BOSTON STUDENTS SHOWED THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH FACULTY AND STAFF MEMBERS LAST SPRING, URGING UMASS ADMINISTRATORS TO HONOR THEIR AGREEMENT. (PHOTO CREDIT: GARY ZABEL).

Stronger Together, continued from cover.

The coalition showed its strength in dramatic fashion when student, staff and faculty protesters lined up across campus to deliver petitions with more than 5,000 signatures to the Chancellor's office. The message: faculty, staff and students were united in opposition to a plan that would have fallen most heavily on students and the lowest paid employees on campus.

The alliance that formed around the parking issue, notes Hess, constituted a major step forward. "For the first time, students were allowed to participate in bargaining, which is in our interest and theirs." Now faculty and student representatives are hoping to use what has become a real partnership to push back on an administration bent on shifting costs onto students, and to lay out an alternate vision for funding public education.

At the Board of Trustees meeting, FSU President and economics faculty Marlene Kim joined leaders of the Professional Staff Union and the Classified Staff Union to oppose the fee increase. "[T]he recent fee and tuition increases hurt students," Kim told the Trustees. "I see this in my classes. One student had no heat. One had no winter shoes. Some are hungry. Many work so many hours to afford the costs of college, they don't have the time, or they are too tired, to do their homework or write their papers.

Kim noted that financial aid doesn't always cover these increased expenses. "Not everyone qualifies for financial aid. Many students fall through the cracks: Their parents don't pay, don't pay enough, or can't pay what

the State says they are supposed to afford." She told the Trustees that her own experience as a student mirrored that of too many students at UMass Boston.

"I was one of these students. I fell through the cracks. I worked many hours through college. I was tired from working; I was hungry. If you're tired and hungry, you can't perform well in school. I did this back when the state covered most of the costs of college."

Kim and other union and student representatives urged the Trustees and state officials to look to alternatives to "digging an ever-deeper well of student debt," including supporting the "Fair Share" Amendment (see page three) that would raise money for education and transportation by increasing taxes on millionaires in Massachusetts.

Student Jillian Brelsford says that while she hopes that the alliance with campus unions results in real gains for students, it also represents an important opportunity for union members to talk to students about what unions do. "Members of FSU should talk to their students about the union," says Brelsford. "Talk to them about the fee increase, and let them know they have your support. Remind them that students successfully fought the parking fee increase a few years back. Let your students know that you belong to the FSU, and that the FSU supports students." ■



UMASS FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS JOINED FORCES IN 2013 TO URGE ADMINISTRATORS TO RETHINK A PROPOSED PARKING FEE HIKE THAT WOULD HAVE HIT STUDENTS AND THE LOWEST PAID EMPLOYEES ON CAMPUS HARDEST.

Why Be a Member of a Union? continued from p. 4.

Just in the past couple of years, FSU has achieved the following:

- Generous raises of 3.5% per year for three years (1.4% of this merit)
- Successfully fought off give-backs (giving up benefits we had that management insisted we give up)
- Secured retroactive pay to July 1, 2014 when this contract started (management had refused to pay the first 10 months of the raises agreed to in the new contract). For a faculty member earning \$60,000, that translates to over \$800 in back pay for the cost of raise living portion alone.
- Prevented the administration from raising parking fees to \$10.
- Prevented the health care premium cost share you pay from increasing (see sidebar on page 4 and below).
- Represented scores of faculty in grievances, including a tenured faculty who was fired (we are fighting the administration so that she keeps her job).

- Represented scores of non-tenure track faculty who were paid below the the contract-mandated salary floors, resulting in payouts to members totaling over \$250,000.

- Retained an additional \$1000 in travel funds for faculty per year.

If you are an FSU member, you are eligible for free liability insurance (if you are sued by a student, for example) and are eligible for free legal services. You do not have access to this if you are not a member. You can also itemize union dues payments on your taxes.

Please let us continue to help you by becoming a member of the FSU if you are not already one. Your dues helped fund the lobbying that helped deliver your retro pay and prevented your health care premium cost share from increasing. ■

Marlene Kim is FSU President. She is also a labor economist, former union staff member (for SEIU and the Labor Center at UC Berkeley), and teaches the course Unions and Collective Bargaining at UMass Boston. Much of this material comes from her course lecture for this class.

Unions Fight Health Insurance Increases, continued from p. 4.

It was only after the unions and, more importantly, thousands of union members, voiced their strong opposition to the proposed premium increase that the House and Senate removed it from the budget that the Governor would eventually sign into law. This was a great victory, one that would save many union members up to \$1,200 a year.

Although the actions taken by thousands of union members in opposing the proposed premium increases were critical for this successful fight, union staffers and the allocation of a substantial amount of union resources are also essential. It takes a sizable infrastructure to mount such a campaign: Postcards and informational literature needs to be written, printed, and distributed. Staff constantly maintain and update email, mail, and phone distribution lists and ensure that MTA members are updated and informed on all the issues. And this doesn't even include the salaries of the MTA lobbyists and field representatives who provide vital organizational support to their locals.

The question is often asked: apart from bargaining contracts and representing members during grievances, what is it that the union does for its members? In the fight against the proposed health care premium increase we have an answer. The MTA is the largest union in the state, representing over 100,000 teachers, faculty members, and staffers in K-12 and in higher education. Its voice is a powerful one on Beacon Hill. Legislators know that when they support proposed legislation that is opposed by the MTA and its members they risk the ire of a mobilized, highly influential rank and file organization with significant resources at its disposal. This doesn't mean the MTA and other public sector employee unions always succeed in reversing the course of legislation that would be harmful to its members. But a strong union does ensure that the voice of thousands of educators and state employees will be heard at the State House and beyond—and it makes it that much more possible for victories such as this to occur. ■

Interrogating Structural Racism on Campus

BY SOFYA APTEKAR, SOCIOLOGY, ASSISTANT EDITOR

This November saw an eruption of activism across university campuses, as students of color and their allies challenged deep-rooted racism in historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs), from University of Missouri to Yale. The vibrant social movements have drawn attention to the institutionalized, systemic – if nowadays more subtle – racist practices that confront not just students of color, but also staff and faculty in higher education. “Although the history and current conditions at UMB differ from places like Mizzou and Yale, structural racism is our reality as well. This fall, The Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning organized a series of forums on structural racism, which fostered conversations among students, staff and faculty on this critical issue.

The series began with “Taking the Temperature: Teaching and Learning about Structural Racism.” A large crowd of mostly faculty, with some students and staff, were guided through group activities that encouraged deep conversations about racism on and off campus. The following forum featured a panel of UMB students, who spoke of their own experiences of racism on campus and their activism. These stories, many of painful experiences of discrimination, bias, and exclusion, were met with additional stories from the audience, as well as questions. Planned before student protests against racism galvanized campuses across the country, the series promises to help build crucial foundations for conversations and action in combatting racism on our campus, a fight that is key for students, faculty, and staff. ■

Faculty Governance, continued from p. 5.

The new committee, which was approved in October, and whose three faculty members were formerly voted on at the last Faculty Council meeting, will collect data on university hiring during the past five years.

The Faculty Council also approved the creation of another committee: one that will examine the relationship between gender, minority status, service commitments, and the role of these intersecting factors in tenure and promotion. Schotten notes that both committees were created in response to faculty requests and complaints. “There’s a real concern that Faculty Council has been too passive and inactive. We’ve really been working to change that and making the Council more responsive to faculty concerns is an important first step,” says Schotten.

Gerber’s book, *The Rise and Decline of Faculty Governance*, ends with an urgent appeal to university faculty members across the country. Gerber urges faculty to take up the fight for the future of higher education, and “make the case to the American public that current trends, including the deprofessionalization of the faculty and the retreat from the practices of shared governance, pose a danger to the future well-being of American society.” Without shared governance, writes Gerber, academic rigor and educational quality suffer. ■

The next open meeting of the Faculty Council will be Nov 30th from 1-3 p.m. in the Ryan Lounge. The meeting is open to faculty only. Faculty members are urged to come and bring their questions and concerns.

The FSU will be highlighting faculty governance issues and concerns that you identify in our spring newsletter. Please send examples of these to us at fsu@umb.edu.

Join Us!

The MTA’s Ethnic Minorities Affairs Committee Conference

“Equality, Activism and the Road Ahead” is the theme of the conference. Discuss some of the most pressing issues in education today — along with workshops to build skills and the opportunity to broaden professional networks.

When: December 4 and 5.

Where: Sheraton Framingham Hotel and Conference Center

Let us know ASAP if you want to attend.



Stay in the loop and up-to-date by ‘liking’ the FSU on Facebook. To find us, search for Umass Boston Faculty Staff Union.