

The Classified Staff are in the midst of our next 3-year successor agreement. This is the administration's opportunity to invest in the CSU like never before. Show that you value us and the critical work we perform by providing us with a living wage and benefits that are on par with the other unions on this campus.

The university's strategic plan must commit to elevating the lowest paid wage earners with a livable wage for the times. Classified staff members who are forced to work 2 or more jobs to stay afloat and even then, are barely able to survive the growing insurmountable costs associated with core basic necessities; members who are forced to rely on food pantries, food stamps, housing subsidies, WIC, and Mass Health as a secondary source of health insurance to offset our enormous contribution and deductible costs. And we haven't even included the insane costs for prescriptions.

Members should NOT have to work more than one job to have a sustainable life. The work-life balance for CSU members is broken. It is broken because no one in the previous administrations has bothered to see our worth and invest in us! We have been overworked, overburdened, overlooked and undervalued but the Classified Staff Union will no longer sit idly by and allow this mistreatment to continue.

It is time for you to invest in the Classified Staff, the cornerstone and foundation of this university. You must value us, commit to elevating us, both in terms of our wages, as well as professional development and growth using a career ladder system that will provide opportunities for members to grow and acquire new and more advanced skills. Those advanced skills then allow CSU members to grow more autonomously and engage in independent, higher functioning tasks. Investing in a career ladder will broaden a member's depth of knowledge which can ultimately showcase our talents and commitment in elevating UMass Boston as being a standout university in the public university system.

This administration can no longer sit idly by and create further dissension within and between the unions on this campus. The Classified Staff have not had a major overhaul of our pay scale in nearly 20 years! You have invested in the Professional Staff with a 40%+ pay scale overhaul in the last 3-year contract and it is time for the Classified Staff to receive financial gains beyond the parameters that the Governor sets forth.

One, two and even three percent raises have not kept up with inflation and in fact, it has landed many CSU members even further into the red and negative, especially regarding the exorbitant health insurance premium costs that rise significantly every year. The university must find a way to prevent the Classified Staff from falling even further down this rabbit hole.

The MIT living wage calculator states that for the Boston area, a single adult with no children must earn \$62,483 to live "comfortably" – the lowest paid member in CSU is currently earning only \$50,005, BEFORE TAXES! That is an extreme imbalance, made even worse when one considers how much of our earnings are further reduced by the high health insurance costs, the unsustainable price of parking on campus as many of

our members have no alternative due to childcare, elder care or getting to and from their second job or other responsibilities that result in their need to drive and park on campus.

I would like to share a few examples from the Living Wage testimonies that Classified Staff members shared with management at our October 2 meeting.

TESTIMONY 1

I, as well as many of my colleagues, have had to work multiple jobs while employed at UMass Boston because our primary employment here does not provide compensation that covers our expenses. Skyrocketing housing costs mean that often we cannot live near our work, therefore incurring greater costs and the stress of commuting and extending our workday with long commutes. The University encourages us to rely on public transportation, yet the consistent failing of the state infrastructure means that our long commutes are unpredictable. And despite the encouragement, the University does not offer discounts to employees in line with other institutions in the city to make those commute times worth our time. Similarly, having to pay as much as \$300 a month to park at our place of employment often feels like we are being penalized. It is bad for morale, employee retention, and discouraging for our students who are already coming from difficult financial situations.

TESTIMONY 2

If the university really cares about the wellbeing of its employees, they will agree to an increase in the wages of employees here. Families cannot survive off a wage that is not in step with the cost-of-living increases. Boston's rent increases, food inflation within this country really is hitting families of color very hard making it increasingly harder to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

TESTIMONY 5

Most administrative workers in my department have the option to work hybrid schedules, however my specific position requires me to be on campus Monday through Friday. Commuting to campus five days per week requires me to live decently close to the area. As a single adult with no children who works full time, I cannot afford a studio apartment within an hour of Boston on my current salary. So as a hardworking young adult, who is also financially intelligent and has minimal debt, I am stuck renting a room in a 4 bedroom, 1 bathroom apartment that I share with 3 other people. 4 strangers sharing small living quarters is not what any full-time working adult wants to call home, nor should I have to.

I'm sure I am speaking for others as well when I say I have fear and anxiety surrounding the cost of living in comparison to my salary. After covering my monthly basic human necessities such as rent, utilities, insurance, transportation to work, and groceries, I am left with very little to put towards other basic needs, such as clothes and (hopefully)

savings for the future. In addition to my position at UMass, I have an independent side-hustle that I do part time to help make ends meet. By giving up many luxuries and living the frugal way I do, I am able to get by. However, I live in constant fear of the next unexpected and pricey event that life throws at me. What if I need to get work done on my car? What if I need surgery? What if my roommates need to move? How will I pay for it?

TESTIMONY 6

I spend just over 50% of my pay towards rent, it's been like that for many years now, with many times having to take money out of what little I have saved in order to supplement the shortfall.

When I think of the millions of dollars (I heard) it took to rebrand this university (new logo) when you could have put the money to better use, higher raises, more contributions to the health insurance and retirement plans. It seems there is plenty of money to be found when it suits your needs.

TESTIMONY 7

I will turn 43 years old next month and after more than 16 years, my partner and I are still living with his parents. Not because they are elderly and need our help, but because **we need their help**. Due to various factors, we have never been financially able to afford our own housing. Our student loans have been our biggest burden and after spending over a decade trying to pay them off, we are struggling to make up for lost time with our savings and trying to build up our retirement funds while in our forties. Our decision to not get married and to not have children was largely based on our financial situation, even though we both have degrees and full-time jobs.

When most people find out that I work for UMass Boston and have a job with the state, they say "Oh, that's amazing!" but the reality for me is much different. While I am grateful for what I have, I know that I am further behind than where I want to be, and I spend much of my time wondering if I'll ever get to a place where I feel comfortable and secure with the salary, I am currently making at UMB. I wonder if I'll ever be able to afford my own house or if I will be at the mercy of others for the rest of my life. I wonder if I will ever have enough money to retire or if I will have to continue to work well into my later years to make ends meet because I wasn't able to save enough. I wonder if I am one small disaster away from financial ruin. The good future I was looking for has not panned out yet.

TESTIMONY 8

For most of the years I had to work a second job part time outside of UMass and did many various side jobs on my own to try to make ends meet. I've seen the price of everything increase except my pay. I see outside contractors coming onto campus every single day knowing they are getting the state mandated prevailing wage doing the exact same job as me and I'm getting less than half of what they are being paid. To me

this is discrimination and makes me feel like a nobody and unappreciated. We are licensed tradesmen that still have to go back to school every few years to keep our state license up to date.

TESTIMONY 18

The average cost of a 1-bedroom apartment right now is roughly \$2,750. In 2023 my base pay at this University was about \$43,800 - which comes to about \$3,600 a month, meaning housing costs alone would cost me about 75% of my paycheck.

I'm fortunate enough that my wife and I were eventually able to scrape together enough to secure an apartment - but it was not an easy process. Our applications were denied at six different apartments. This was emotionally demoralizing, mentally exhausting, and financially crippling - we burnt away what little savings we had on application fees and my credit score plummeted from being run so many times.

The apartment we did finally manage to secure has clear signs of mold and pests, just like the apartment we had been in previously - and I can't help but notice the parallels to the state of the buildings on this campus. I spend my days in Wheatley Hall - where signs on the water fountains warn people that water isn't safe to drink, where there are known air quality issues, where we have mice in our offices on a regular basis, where soggy ceiling tiles and mysterious drips are a regular occurrence - and then I go home to my apartment with so many similar issues.

This is the reality that the wages this University pays us forces CSU members to live with. I can't help but feel outraged every time this University has the audacity to call itself "health promoting" - whose health are you promoting? Because I sure don't feel like it's mine or the health of my fellow CSU members.

TESTIMONY 19

However, since the pandemic the cost of living has risen. I have been struggling greatly financially. I have had to move into my mother-in-law's basement which is mold infested.

I had no choice but to live there while pregnant and for the first year of my baby's life. Sadly, this took a toll on my health and wellbeing. The solution I found to get out of this living situation was to use my retirement funds.

I have also had to use my retirement funds to pay off some pressing debt. Unfortunately, I still have debt, and I am still paying my retirement back. Because of this I cannot make contributions to my retirement savings at this time.

I have also had to stop driving into the university because I cannot afford to pay for parking. I currently have multiple tickets to my name, due to not affording to pay the parking daily rate. Because my entire paycheck goes to paying bills, there is nothing left over for my family or even the parking fees.

With the Mission Statement on the university's website, under "Commitments, subcategory – Operational Excellence" – the university's mission statement says the following:

"Recognizing that investment comes in many forms, we will reallocate existing dollars, reimagine the ways we work, prioritize renewable resources, improve multi-year planning, and strengthen campus service delivery."

The Classified Staff demands that you invest in us by reallocating a portion of those existing dollars to provide us with a living wage; we ask that you reimagine the ways in which we work by hiring more staff and creating fair flexible hybrid opportunities to fill vacant positions which will allow for greater and improved work-life balance for current employees that our fellow unions already enjoy.

Chancellor Marcelo, I am speaking to you directly. Many times, I have heard you speak now. You talk about your roots and where you came from, the struggles and adversities that you faced but also about the people who helped you get through those difficult times. Now, you have a choice – to help your employees who deserve a living wage and show us that you not only believe in, but will uphold the vision statement of UMass Boston, as representing itself as an anti-racist, health-promoting institution; or do nothing, and it will show the entire campus community and the community at large, that you do not stand behind the vision statement because in the end, they are nothing but hollow meaningless words meant to lull people into a false sense of security!

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