

Union News

• FROM THE FACULTY STAFF UNION •

One Campus, United

BY JENNIFER BERKSHIRE, UNION NEWS EDITOR

The protestors stretched from the Chancellor's office down to the plaza, hundreds of students, faculty and staff lined up to deliver petitions with more than 5,000 signatures, all decrying a plan to hike the cost of parking up to \$10 in 2013. The protest was a visible symbol of how the proposal by UMass administrators has united campus groups in opposition to a plan that they say falls most heavily on students and the lowest paid employees.

Marlene Kim, a faculty member in the economics department and the interim president of the Faculty Staff Union, says that the debate over the cost of parking at UMass is part of a much larger issue. "By trying to raise money on the backs of students and people who can't afford it the university limits who can come here," says Kim. "The larger question here is 'are we going to have public education that is affordable and accessible to students?'"

While it remains unclear just what will happen with the proposed fee hike—at press time the university had just closed down the North Lot, further limiting an already insufficient supply of parking spots—organizers say that they're hopeful about the future of the coalition that has emerged on campus. "It's really exciting to see all of the campus groups bring such passion to an issue," says Lorenzo Nencioli, membership coordinator for the faculty staff union. "The groundwork has been laid for us to work together on broader issues of equity and the affordability of public education."

STAND TOGETHER

Soon after UMass administrators announced the plan to hike fees, campus unions and other groups formed the



STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF DELIVER PETITIONS TO THE CHANCELLOR OPPOSING A PROPOSED PARKING FEE INCREASE

coalition known as STOP: Stand Together, Oppose the Parking Fee Increase! STOP, which includes the Faculty Staff Union, the Professional Staff Union, the Classified Staff Union, the Graduate Employee Organization and student representatives, began organizing to fight the increase, but also to call attention to inequities in the university's existing parking and transportation policies.

A research committee was formed to assess the impact of a fee increase on students and campus staff and compare UMass Boston's parking fees and transportation policies with peer institutions. A survey of students and campus workers drew 759 responses, real-life stories about the hardships that students already face commuting to a campus that charges more for parking than any other public college or university in the state.





This Union is for You

Letter from the Interim President

Dear Colleagues,

I'm serving as FSU President while Catherine Lynde is on sabbatical this semester. My letter this issue will discuss parking and the movement to a 2:2 course load, but first I'd like to tell you a little bit about me.

I grew up in an immigrant neighborhood in Los Angeles, and because of this, learned Spanish from the streets. My parents were farm workers—I've seen the low pay and degrading conditions many people labor in. I worked in low-paid food service before moving up to low-paid clerical work while (barely) supporting myself through college and graduate school. Because of these experiences, I've always felt that this nation could do better. As a result, I am a labor economist studying the working poor and race and gender discrimination.

I've been a community activist and then union activist, working at the Labor Center at UC Berkeley and then for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). I've continued to work with many different labor unions, either teaching popular economics to ordinary workers, helping unions with economic analysis for their contracts, or otherwise trying to prevent workers from getting hammered.

It's great to work for my own union, and I've heard about a lot of problems from across the campus. The confluence of having a new contract, new AFR procedures, and movement to a 2:2 course load in CLA has produced a perfect storm that has conspired to keep me away from my research deadlines as the number of questions and concerns on campus have mushroomed. Catherine chose a great semester to take her leave!

Here's an update on some of the issues:

Pay increases: At last! Both merit pay (due on 6/30/12) and cost of living increases (1.75%, due on 7/1/12) appeared in your October 26, 2012 paycheck. Retroactive pay back to these dates will be paid on 11/9/12. We will be receiving another salary increase come January 2013 and again in June 2013. We'll see how long these take.

Bargaining for Non-Tenure Track Faculty; Distance Learning: Bargaining in these areas was relegated to separate committees for the current contract. Bargaining for NTTs is underway but stalled (see page 6); bargaining for distance learning has yet to begin.

New travel money: The current contract stipulates that all tenure track faculty must receive \$1000 per year for this and the next academic year in new travel money in addition to any professional development (PD) money that each college had provided. Contact your Dean for information and application procedures and keep us informed if you encounter problems.

Parking fees: We still need volunteers to help with organizing, research and negotiations. Please volunteer! If you are too busy, you can still help in small ways. Contact the union office for petitions and sign-up sheets.

Closing of the North Parking Lot: The North Lot will close permanently at the end of this fall semester. We are very concerned about the effect this will have on faculty and staff and our ability to perform our jobs, and will ask the administration to meet and bargain over the impact of the closure.

Continued on bottom of page 7

Contents

ON PARKING ISSUE, ONE CAMPUS UNITED	
JENNIFER BERKSHIRE	PAGE 1
LETTER TO COLLEAGUES	
MARLENE KIM	PAGE 2
LEARNING FROM QUEBEC	
JOHN HESS	PAGE 3
REFLECTIONS ON THE CHICAGO TEACHERS STRIKE	
AL LEISINGER.....	PAGE 4
INTERVIEW WITH FORMER UNION NEWS EDITOR DOROTHY NELSON	
AMY TODD.....	PAGE 5
NTT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORTS	
LARRY KAYE/JOHN HESS.....	PAGE 7

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

fsu@umb.edu, 617-287-6295

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Editor: Jennifer C. Berkshire

Writers for this issue, Fall 2012: Jennifer Berkshire, John Hess, Al Leisinger, Tom Johnson, Larry Kaye, Marlene Kim, Dorothy Nelson and Amy Todd.

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For past issues of Union News, a list of union officers, information about the union contract and other matters visit the website: www.fsu.umb.edu

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Learning from the Quebec Student Strike

JOHN HESS, ENGLISH

I have visited Montreal at least once a year since 1972. During all that time, my Quebecois and Quebecoise friends have made one consistent complaint about Americans: that they know little to nothing about Canada, and even less about Quebec. That is a great shame, not because it bruises my friends' egos but because Quebec is a successful, though hardly perfect, social democracy on a northern European model, that has much to teach us.

A recent movement in Quebec deserves a long and deep look. The massive student movement and strike *contre la hausse* (against the tuition hike) that exploded last semester, is one of the most significant social movements in North America since the 1970s. I think we can learn much from it, despite the differences in our cultures. I want to highlight a few important points.

The strike did not spring from nowhere. It was the result of years of patient organizing and many failures, and of continual efforts to inform and educate not only students but all of Quebec society about the importance of truly affordable public higher education and of the role universities should play in a democratic society. While the tuition hikes that were proposed by the provincial government were by American standards modest—\$1,625 over three years—Quebec students thought they were outrageous. Their target was not just the provincial government and the proposed hike, but rather the government and the hike as instances of what they call a neo-liberal consensus to use austerity as a way of redistributing wealth from the mass of the population to the wealthy, of eroding and then devastating social programs, and thus of deforming and perhaps destroying democracy.

The students were able to sustain a very controversial strike for several months, using open and democratic assemblies on each campus to make decisions, culminating in a one day mass walkout of over 300,000 university and community college students on March 22, with a march of over 200,000 in Montreal.

Two other important lessons remain to be highlighted. First, the Quebec student movement did not look to politicians to solve their problems; they made the politicians come to them, and then refused to make deals with them. There was no talk of which candidates the movement

should work for, no organizing of phone banks for this or that presumed savior. The Liberal Party that had ruled for some 8 years was defeated in the September election; the new government rescinded the proposed “hausse”; the student movement celebrated its victory and has now turned its efforts toward a long range goal: free public higher education for all Quebecois and Quebecoises who qualify.

The second lesson: There is no substitute to building sustainable democratic progressive mass organizations like Quebec students started decades ago. Despite all of the chatter about new communication technologies, creative organizing and flash mobs, these tools and tactics can't easily mobilize and sustain a critical mass to achieve such a tangible victory.



QUEBEC STUDENT STRIKE LEADERS
ALEXIA LEWIS (LEFT), RICHARD HINTON
AND JOHN HESS AT UMASS BOSTON.

Frederick Douglass named his abolitionist newspaper *The North Star*. Perhaps it is time we, too, once again look north to find inspiration in our struggle to make this a better world for all.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [A history and overview of the Quebec student strike](http://wagingnonviolence.org/2012/09/quebec-student-strike-wins-big/)
- [Video of the March 2012 walkout](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQZJrO4zpG8)
- [Reflections on the meaning of the strike and its consequences](http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/711.php)

Reflections from Chicago: What Kind of Union do We Need?

AL LEISINGER *MATHEMATICS,*
NTT GRIEVANCE OFFICER

The Chicago Teachers' Strike this fall was a signal that we don't have to lie down and take the attacks on public education that have come down from both Democratic and Republican administrations. Of the more than 26,000 CTU members who went on strike, just 20 crossed the picket line.

On Tuesday, October 16, Carol Caref, who heads the CTU's professional development center, gave a wonderful, thought-provoking talk at UMass Boston. She spoke about how, until 2010, the CTU was controlled by a leadership that did "business as usual." She termed this kind of union a "grievance union." In the past two decades, scores of the city's public schools have been closed or handed over to private operators, while 100 new charter schools, staffed predominantly by non-union teachers, have opened. Significantly, these school closings began under Obama's current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, former "CEO" of

current CTU president Karen Lewis, formed a caucus within the union to fight school closings. They reached out to parents and students with the idea that only a uni-



STRIKING TEACHERS RALLY IN DOWNTOWN CHICAGO IN SEPTEMBER.

fied movement of teachers, parents and students could win a fight for better schools, and began organizing demonstrations against the closures. The teachers also took

A pro-active, fighting union, not just a "grievance union"

the Chicago school system. Caref explained that while schools in poor and black neighborhoods were being closed down, more schools were opened in wealthier areas of Chicago. Still, the union merely filed grievances as usual.

Nor do teachers in Chicago have so-called "excess" rights. In the Boston Public Schools, for example, a teacher in good standing, who loses his or her job because of administrative changes, joins an "excess pool" giving the teacher rights to any open job posting within his/her specialty throughout the city. In Chicago, teachers who worked at schools slated for closure were out of a job, and had no more access to a job posting than anyone from outside the system. As a result, the composition of Chicago's teaching force has been transformed since the advent of "education reform." In 1995 45% of the city's teachers were African American—today that number is just 19%. A handful of teachers, including Ms. Caref and

on the task of winning leadership of the CTU, by doing as a caucus what the old CTU leadership had refused to do: connect the struggle for better teaching conditions with the fight for a decent education for all students.

Furthermore, the caucus spoke openly about racism as a theme in the privatization plans of Mayor Emanuel's administration.

On June 11, 2010, the caucus was elected into leadership of the CTU. They organized a collective base of support, by means of actions, small and large, that demonstrated unity. As they bargained over their contract, they faced open hostility from Mayor Rahm Emanuel, former Chief of Staff for President Obama. Ms. Caref termed Mayor Emanuel "the gift that just keeps giving." By this she meant, that after every attack by the Mayor, the union went back and organized more broadly and deeply.

Continued on bottom of page 8

“This is not just my own life...”

• Interview conducted by Amy Todd, Anthropology

You once belonged to the International Union of Electrical Workers. What do industrial unions and academic unions offer besides benefits and job protection?

Unions encourage people to work together, something that is basic to human nature. My first union job was as a floor boy at the Sylvania plant in Salem. I had to lift and load 90 pound buckets of threaded metal pieces into a machine, something I could never have done alone. There were many times that things could have fallen on my head, when I could have been injured. But people noticed I needed help; they saw me struggling and stepped in. Unions foster this kind of community. If someone is tired or can't work as fast on an assembly line, others pick up the slack. I learned about stewardship as an IUE member. I also saw management's tactics, like speed up; vocal union members would find the belt going a little faster. When necessary, unions can withhold their labor and strike. The right to strike is a core value of unionism.

In academia, there is so much focus on individual productivity. Teachers must make time to build good relationships and show that they care about each other. Unions help foster community because we know that we are working for the benefit of others, not just ourselves. When you are concerned about the rights of all of the faculty it is likely you will be more interested in the workings of the university as a whole. When you feel that your union work is integral to the success of the students and the institution, you become a more effective teacher. Unions should provide a sense of dignity and confidence. This can be true at UMass Boston as long as the union is strong.

How did your early work in community and industrial organizing influence your academic unionism and educational philosophy?

I became more active politically during the Vietnam War and more aware of working class and labor issues while working for the East Boston Community News, a non-profit community run newspaper. Dr. Paul Epstein at the East Boston Health Clinic was treating shipyard workers for asbestos exposure. I wrote a story about it and it resulted in a major inspection of the Bethlehem shipyards. From there I took a job with Urban Planning Aid editing a

newsletter for unionists on occupational health and safety. I also started an unemployed workers group in East Boston where we showed labor films and read labor history. Around that time I took a job supported by the National Lawyers Guild to represent miners with black lung disease. My young sons and I left for Northern West Virginia. Once a week I was teaching older miners about their rights under the Black Lung Law, spreading the word among miners and their doctors about how to fill out forms correctly and representing miners in court who were contesting decisions. What I saw, the extreme poverty, the disrespect toward older miners who were very sick and had been



• FORMER UNION NEWS EDITOR DOROTHY NELSON HIKING IN NEW MEXICO.

• working since 8th grade, really changed my life. It's a longer story I hope to write about at some point. Community organizing in East Boston and West Virginia convinced me that education is important across the board. What we should be trying to do, whether in industry or academia or in the communities, is to get people to think beyond their immediate situation, to see themselves in a broader context.

• Over the years, I have been proud to work with this great faculty and to be part of this wonderful university. UMass Boston is on par with those colleges and universities that encourage one-on-one engagement between teachers and students, value small classes and are willing to break away from the traditional lecture format.

Continued on top of page 8

One Campus, United

continued from cover

“What really came through is that many staff and students are hurting under the current system,” says Mary Jo Connelly, who works with the Professional Staff Association. “Having to pay \$1000-\$1500 a year just to park is a real strain for a lot of people.”

The research committee also analyzed stacks of financial documents provided by UMass in response to information request submitted by the campus unions. The researchers’ analysis, says Connelly, found nothing to support the administration’s claim that a hike in parking fees is necessary.

Organizers say that the parking fee increase is symbolic of a larger question about what kind of school UMass Boston is going to be—and what kind of student body the school will ultimately serve. Mitch Manning, the outreach coordinator for the 800 member Graduate Employee Organization, argues that the implications of that debate are visible on campus in the building spree that is currently underway, particularly the \$222 million science center. “Can you be a working class school and a top-flight research university at the same time? That’s what it comes down to,” says Manning.

In recent years, state support for public higher education in Massachusetts has dipped significantly. In the past three years alone, state appropriations to public universities including UMASS have dropped by more than 15%. And as public funding is reduced, the burden of responsibility is increasingly being shifted onto individual students—and private corporate interests, warns

PSU member and STOP organizer Annetta Argyres. “It changes the whole definition of accessibility when you have a tiered system where students get preferential treatment based on their ability to pay,” says Argyres.

But as Marlene Kim points out, few members of UMass Boston’s existing student body *are* able to pay more. “Our students are squeezed now,” says Kim, noting that she encounters more and more students who can’t afford to buy books, or who only visit campus when absolutely essential. “I don’t think the university has thought this through—UMass can do better than this.”

STOP organizers says that strong student participation has strengthened their efforts, something they hope will continue as the campus community responds to ongoing questions about access, equity and affordability. Alexis Marvel, the elected student representative on the Board of Trustees, describes the coalition’s organizing as “pretty incredible.” She says that she and her peers are acutely aware of UMass Boston’s special status as the only public university in Boston. “We can’t afford to be shutting students out because the administration has a price point in mind for parking or fees.”



President’s Letter, continued from p. 2

Movement to a 2:2 course load in CLA: Reports from various task forces as well as the draft final proposal can be viewed at http://www.umb.edu/academics/cla/info_for_faculty. We do have a right to negotiate these changes. We have heard from some of you about your concerns about this change. Please feel free to continue to contact us with these.

Budget: The problem of not providing departments with their carry-forwards has caused agony and concern, as junior faculty cannot access their start-up money, research money put in various accounts cannot be accessed any longer, and overhead brought into the university by research grants has been taken away. Got a story, concern or a problem because of this? Contact us. We are collecting stories and pressing for a resolution.

New AFRs: Wasn’t this electronic AFR fun, as always? We thought so, too. If you have any feedback to improve this, send them to AFRsupport@umb.edu. If you had any concerns about the process, contact Rajini.Srikanth@umb.edu and cc the union at fsu@umb.edu.

This union is for you. We appreciate hearing any concerns, comments, or suggestions from you so that we can continue to improve this university and your working conditions. It has been a huge pleasure to serve you this semester. I will continue to do so by serving on the FSU bargaining team and Executive Board once I turn the reins back to Catherine in the spring. Stay involved in the union. We’re only as strong as our members are active and voice their opinions and concerns.

Regards,

Marlene Kim, Economics, FSU Interim President

NTT Update

LARRY KAYE, *PHILOSOPHY*, FSU VICE PRESIDENT

NTT bargaining has been temporarily suspended so far this term at the request of management. The main reason for the extension is that some significant, progressive changes are being considered that require extensive discussion that exceeded the narrow time frame that was allotted to main table bargaining in an attempt to meet legislative budget deadline.

Although management delayed the start of NTT sessions until the end of the semester, we had a number of meetings between May and July. The primary topic of discussion has been the possible implementation of “continuing employment” (CE) for a large portion of current NTT faculty, roughly those who have relatively stable positions under the present prioritized course assignment system. Under this model, CE faculty would have a defined, ongoing employment status (50%, 75% or 100% time) that would not be subject to alternation based on semester-to-semester fluctuations in available courses. For such faculty, a reduction in time would require formal notice a year in advance.

We have not yet had an extended discussion about which faculty would be main CE; it is our goal to have all benefited post-probationary NTT faculty put on this status.

Management seems eager to do CE for NTT faculty, since it will greatly reduce paperwork and will also make life easier for chairs, who will be able to assign a predetermined number of sections to many of their NTT faculty in the same way that courses are assigned for tenure stream faculty. However, we have reached a bit of an impasse since management is also insisting that those post-probationary NTT faculty who do not qualify for CE will lose their present prioritized hiring (just cause) status and become completely contingent. We see no reason why this is needed, and in any case, the FSU will not trade away rights of some of its members in exchange for an enhancement for other members. But we remain optimistic about reaching agreement on this issue, since a move to CE will be of great benefit to management as well as to faculty.

Our other main proposal is that the standard full-time load for NTT be altered from 4 courses, teaching only to 3 courses plus service or scholarship. This has not yet been discussed in detail; we will focus on this in future sessions.

The FSU NTT bargaining team consists of John Hess, Sandra Howland, Larry Kaye, Kathy Kogan, and Amy Todd, along with Mickey Gallagher (MTA).

Health and Safety

JOHN HESS *ENGLISH*, HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Health and Safety Committee is a university committee composed of representatives of the three faculty and staff unions and management. Here are its Mission Statement and Objectives.

Mission Statement

To serve as a university-wide ombudsman: receiving reports of incidents, concerns, and issues; providing recommendations to improve processes related to workplace health and safety; and maintaining communication regarding workplace health and safety, for a diverse and representational group of university personnel.

Objectives

1. Initiating discussion surrounding incidents and issues of concern.
2. Providing follow through of existing issues until adequately resolved.
3. Facilitating access to and dissemination of existing health and safety protocols and other educational information to the broader University community.
4. Examining health and safety problems/issues and developing plans/procedures to address them.
5. Reviewing processes and recommending improvements to data collection and reporting systems that track hazards, incidents and injuries on campus .

The committee was an effective venue to push for and oversee repairs to the Wheatley roof and then to address air quality issues in the Education offices on the first floor. From that experience H&S developed a template for handling major safety problems in the future and for assuring proper communication to all affected parties. Current concerns are clarifying procedures for dealing with infectious diseases, centralizing incident reporting information, and identifying potentially hazardous conditions on campus.

Next semester we are hoping to unroll a campus wide “Culture of Safety” campaign to make everyone on campus aware of the need for safety and to make sure that everyone knows how to report any accidents, incidents, or hazardous conditions, and where to report them.

The FSU has three reps on the Health and Safety Committee: Julie Winch, Cat Mazza, and John Hess. If you have any safety concerns, please contact one of the reps or fsu@umb.edu.

Interview with Dorothy Nelson, continued from p. 5

I always thought this university was in the vanguard of education so proposals to shift toward a “research agenda,” which seem to be connected to the movement from small to large classes, in my opinion, are not progressive.

What do you think unions need to do to be more effective?

All of us are standing on the shoulders of those who have dedicated their lives to building a more equitable society.

All unions should embody democratic principles, which means countering our individualistic culture. A strong union must engage the rank and file. Sincere activism, challenging the status quo, speaking out in union publications, these things should be encouraged. The rank and file must be deeply informed in all unions. Training should be available for those who would like to be more active. Efforts should be made to involve people who may

be nervous about being active in unions. Union officers and the rank and file should talk on local radio stations, write letters to the editors of local papers, and maintain a strong presence. I also believe union officers should be rotated. People should take turns running meetings and share responsibility for orienting new members.

All of us are standing on the shoulders of those who have dedicated their lives to building a more equitable society. Our dues pay for grievance officers who represent people we may not even know. The idea that this is not just my own life is at the heart of the union. Without unions, democratic principles in this country would be in danger.

With the support of Catherine Lynde, you were able to found the Union News and develop a substantial publication. What do you think makes a good union publication?

Newsletters are often a collection of reports and items collated by one individual. The Union News is different because it depends on input from members of the FSU and other campus unions. The Union News needs to be read by our members and members should write for this publication. This collaborative approach helps to raise people’s consciousness about the issues, about struggles on campus and around the country in higher education.

Dorothy Nelson taught writing and literature at the college level for 25 years. She was a Senior Lecturer in English, an active member of the NTT caucus, and editor of the Union News from 2009-2012. She retired from UMass/Boston in Spring 2011.

Reflections from Chicago, continued from p. 4

With negotiations stalled, union leaders began building for a strike, a process that took two years of preparation. Here’s an example of one successful tactic. In a small but obvious sign of solidarity, teachers were encouraged to wear red, the color of the CTU, on Fridays. Teachers, under attack, and facing a the imposition of an evaluation system they opposed, began to see the potential of mass action as a reality. There had been no strike by Chicago teachers for 25 years.

The CTU set up a contact person and an active organizing committee in every school. They tried to involve every teacher in the mobilizations, discussions, decisions, and actions before the strike. Ultimately 90% of the entire membership, and 99% of those voting, voted to strike. The State of Illinois had passed a law that, in order to strike, a public teachers’ union needed 78% of the ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP to vote in favor. (The proponents of the law, wanting to attack all the public sector unions, figured that to be an impossibility.)

The strike was a difficult battle. By strength and unity, the CTU won a temporary victory, winning concessions on the teacher evaluation procedure, and some rights for excessed teachers, and held the line on class size. (To see the CTU pamphlet, “The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve,” which was widely disseminated to parents and students, visit <http://www.ctunet.com/quest-center/research/the-schools-chicagos-students-deserve>) In these times, we have to fight as hard as we can just to win a little bit. The CTU is now preparing for future battles. But the lessons of this historic strike should be learned by all of us.

For example, the Massachusetts Teachers Association leadership, and the Boston Teachers Union leaders, like the old CTU leaders, operate as “grievance unions.” We face attacks on public K-12 and post-secondary education in our state, as well as nationally. Could we turn the 1.3-million member NEA and our Massachusetts affiliate, the MTA, into the kind of union that the CTU has become? I think we can. *Send comments to leisinger1@gmail.com*

