

1/19/2021 [Allunit] January Updates

Dear colleagues,

As the start of the spring semester is two weeks away, we wanted to share some important updates.

First, we are very pleased to let you know that the administration's proposal for pay cuts for MSP members is now off the table. (ICYMI: the administration asked to cut faculty and librarians' salaries by 6% for the second half of the academic year. The MSP's response and more details are here:

https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1266/faq_from_2020-12-11_membership_meeting_final.pdf

f). Our predictions were vindicated when Congress passed the federal stimulus bill in December, including significant aid to colleges and universities. UMass Amherst is slated to receive approximately \$28 million, which will be more than sufficient to cover the administration's small projected deficit for this year, and will leave our campus with a significant surplus this spring. And we expect even more funds as the Biden Administration works with the new Congress to supply yet more resources to states and public services.

Second, our protest against ongoing "indefinite furloughs" and involuntary hours reductions for staff is more urgent than ever. Many of our departments are severely under-staffed because of voluntary separations and furloughs. Now that funds are available, the MSP has joined with USA and PSU to demand that all staff are brought back full-time. Some of you met to discuss work-to-rule or other possible responses; some departments are planning group grievances; and working groups are considering further actions if staff are not restored. We will be organizing meetings together with USA and PSU, and we encourage you to participate and to organize with your colleagues to demand justice for the staff who make it possible to do our work and to help our students succeed. Full staffing is our most urgent demand.

Third, as vaccines are being provided to health-care workers and emergency responders (Phase 1), everyone is wondering when our colleagues will be eligible. Currently in our state, higher education workers will not be vaccinated until Phase 3, lumped in with "general public," scheduled to begin around April. The MTA is advocating for on-campus higher ed faculty and staff to be included in Phase 2, along with K-12 teachers and staff. In New York and other states, faculty and staff who have direct contact with students are being vaccinated already. Unfortunately, the schedule for vaccination is being decided at the state level, and our campus

has no say in eligibility. The MSP is joining with unions across the state and demanding earlier eligibility for vaccination for on-campus personnel.

Finally, we have heard many concerns from faculty and librarians who will be teaching and working on campus this spring. MSP recently registered strong dissatisfaction with the administration, as faculty had not received any guidance about health and safety protocols for classrooms, adequate ventilation, PPE distribution, notification of exposure, metrics for evaluating campus safety, and other essential information. Just this past weekend, the administration responded with some more details about health and safety on campus. Let us know if you have ongoing questions or concerns as you prepare to teach this spring, and MSP will be happy to follow up.

In solidarity,

Eve

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