ONE LOCAL, ONE PULSE

It’s probably stating the obvious to point out that UMass Amherst and UMass Boston professional staff are organized into ONE local. But sometimes stating the obvious has value. It is a reminder of things we take for granted, like: together we have over 1800 members; we bargain our contracts together; we have a joint executive council that oversees the administration of our local. Yes, each campus has a chapter, but by putting those two chapters together to form ONE local, we are a stronger union.

Shortly after the UMass Boston chapter decided to launch this newsletter – The Pulse – the question arose why is this not a newsletter for our entire local? Why is this UMass Boston only? There was no good reason. In fact, there were lots of good reasons why it should be the newsletter for both Amherst and Boston – for our local. So...in the spirit of solidarity forever and the more the merrier, beginning now with Volume II, The Pulse is officially the newsletter for the PSU local – Amherst and Boston. Yay!

We think that by serving both campuses, The Pulse will be a stronger newsletter and a more valuable communication tool. It is one way for the two campus chapters to get to know one another better. It’s one way that we can share information about the issues that each face and think together about to how to address issues we both face. It’s a great opportunity to help build and strengthen our union.

As is often the case, with opportunity there also come challenges. It’s going to take a little time and effort to coordinate a joint newsletter and make sure that both campuses are well-represented in it.

We’re off to a good start in this first joint issue. Feature articles include an introduction to the new PSU officers at Amherst, a report on the organizing efforts at the Boston campus to fight a parking fee increase, a report from the Women’s Summer School—held last summer at UMA and attended by both UMA and UMB PSU members. Regular features will speak to both campuses: Miss Management talks about comp time and there’s valuable information from our grievance officers.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

To keep the momentum going we are going to need to hear from you – particularly YOU at UMass Amherst – about what you’d like to see in The Pulse. We hope to publish four editions each year—two electronic and two in print. If you have ideas or stories you’d like to submit for review, please let us know. We want to hear what issues are important to you and what you’d like to see covered. We would like you to introduce us to members who are doing interesting things so that we can feature them in upcoming issues. We’d like to know what questions you have about our contract and our union and what kinds of issues interest you. If you would like to work on The Pulse—even better—please send us your name and contact info.

Email us at prostaff.union@umb.edu
Last Spring, UMass Boston management introduced a proposal to raise campus parking by $2 this year, $2 more a year later (to $10 a day in 2013), and then to take it out of bargaining forever so they would be free to increase it as much and as often as they want. PSU—along with the Faculty Staff Union (FSU), Classified Staff Union (CSU) the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO), and representatives of the student government and other student organizations—began organizing to fight the increase and to call attention to inequities in UMB’s parking fees and transportation policies. Despite an agreement specifying an April 3rd negotiation start date, management has yet to fully provide all information requested and bring us to the bargaining table. The first formal meeting is now expected on December 18th.

Multi-Union + Student Organizing Strategy Delivers

Together with other campus unions and with students, the PSU has joined a coalition to oppose the parking fee increases. Between May and October, Stand Together, Oppose the Parking Fee Increase!, or STOP, has actively reached out to all parts of the campus community. STOP leafleted cars, handed out stickers all over campus and resurrected a life-size toll booth that had played a prominent role in the 2001 anti-parking fee increase campaign.

In a few months, STOP collected more than 5,300 signatures on petitions opposing the parking fee increase. On October 11, more than 250 students, staff and faculty stood in line to deliver the petitions to the Chancellor’s office—page by page! The message—“you will not impose your parking fee increase without a serious fight”—was loud and clear. (See Jennifer Berkshire’s story on pages 4 and 5)

Why We’re Fighting on Parking & Transportation

Parking is always a big issue on campuses, and UMB staff and students have good reason to feel that their system is especially unfair. At $6, UMB’s parking fee is already one of the highest at Boston colleges and universities. It’s also higher than parking fees at all of UMB’s urban peer institutions, and many times higher than at other Massachusetts public colleges and universities. Further, the $6 flat fee is a special burden on lower-income staff and students, since UMB has not adopted any of the ‘best practices’ that make parking more equitable for faculty, staff and students at many other institutions (for example, sliding scale by income, parking subsidies, economy rates). UMB is also trying to use higher parking fees to push staff and students to public transit, but without adopting the kinds of positive incentives that other universities use to support public transit riders, such as fare subsidies, rideshare and carpool programs. And we know that some staff and students just don’t have the option of using public transit, so we aren’t going to let drivers be pitted against subway riders.

Our Principles

- **EQUITY**: the cost of this essential service should not be borne disproportionately by students and employees who can least afford it.
- **ACCESS**:
  - Sufficient parking should be available for employees during the hours they work, at sufficient proximity to enable them to arrive at work without additional commuting time.
  - Parking rates must not be set so high as to discourage students and faculty from coming to campus when they do not have class, or discourage community members from attending campus events.
- **INCENTIVES**: There must be positive, not negative, incentives encouraging the use of public transportation.

Using Research

As part of this campaign, PSU is participating in STOP’s parking research committee. The committee did a survey that drew 759 responses, real-life stories about why members and students need to drive: many of us live far from campus and/or far from public transit; some of us come to campus very early or leave very late; others of us are juggling childcare, second and third jobs, elder parents, long

continued on next page
commutes, medical appointments and many other responsibilities. We learned how much of a hardship it is for many staff and students to pay $1000-$1500 a year just to be able to park at work. The parking research committee also did a second study that compared UMass Boston’s parking fees and transportation policies with those at 22 local and 15 national peer institutions, which confirmed for us that fees are already too high and too inequitable. In addition, the committee analyzed stacks of fact-finding documents and financial reports generated by the unions’ information request, and we have concluded that we have seen no information that confirms management’s claim that they need to charge more for parking.

**Parking Fees & Policies: How UMB Compares to Other Universities & Colleges**

**UMB parking fees are already among the highest at Boston-area colleges & universities for faculty, staff and students (now $1069-$1350 annually for U1). If the $10 rate is imposed, UMB will be 2nd highest in the area (at $1250/year, higher than all but Suffolk University).**

UMB’s parking fees are higher than all of its urban peer institutions. UMB’s parking fees are many times higher than all other MA public colleges & universities.

UMB offers none of the ‘best practices’ that make parking more equitable for faculty, staff and students at many other institutions (such as sliding scale by income, parking subsidies, economy rates).

When it comes to the cost of parking, UMass is at the top!

The Research Committee looked at parking costs and practices at other Boston-area campuses, public higher ed campuses across Massachusetts and at UMass Boston’s peer institutions. The figure at left provides a summary of their findings.

**How Boston Schools Incentivize Public Transit Use**

**At UMB**

- Free Shuttle to public transit (standard; UMB’s is paid for by parking fees)
- On-campus sale of MBTA student ‘semester pass’ (standard)
- Pre-tax payment for MBTA passes & payroll deduction (standard)

**Not at UMB**

- Subsidized MBTA passes for faculty and staff (many)
  - % of MBTA pass cost paid: Tufts Medical School = 25% Harvard, MIT=50%, Emmanuel=25%, UMass Medical=100% of bus pass.
  - $/month paid: Berklee=$15, Wentworth=$60, Cambridge=up to $100, MIT= up to $120
- “Commuter Choice” or “CommuteWork” program to work with individual faculty & staff to find practical alternatives—carpools, vanpools, rideshare (Harvard, BC, many)
- Guaranteed Ride Home program -- a ride home for personal illness or emergency, family illness or emergency, or unscheduled/unplanned overtime for faculty & staff who regularly use public or alternative transit (BC, Tufts Med. School, Emmanuel, Simmons)
- Occasional Driver parking rate or pass for faculty and staff who only occasionally need to drive and park, or who have to do so occasionally for work reasons (many have this)
- Commute Swap subsidy to transition from parking to public transit (pays $65/month t-pass subsidy for 3-month transition period (Emmanuel, Simmons, Wentworth, others)
- Bike subsidy $ (MIT) and infrastructure (many) showers, changing rooms, racks, repair station

When it comes to incentives that promote using public transportation, UMass Boston is at the bottom

The Research Committee found that other institutions are way ahead of UMass Boston in terms of offering creative and cost-saving incentives to NOT drive to work.
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 is planning to close down the North Lot in December, 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.”

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! 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, and 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. “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 Union. “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 topflight 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 Vice President and STOP organizer Anneta 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 say 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.”

Photo above: PSU members Marla Filoso, Jamil Moosavifard, Scott Gilbert and Chhorda Rorth gather to help deliver petitions.

THE PEOPLE SPEAK

Last summer, in preparation for bargaining with management, the parking coalition conducted a survey of staff, faculty and students to learn more about how they commute, why they commute the way they do, and how the proposed parking increases would impact them. Over 750 people responded to the survey. In preparation for bargaining, the survey results have been compiled and analyzed and will be used to help inform the bargaining team about parking and transportation needs for our members and what impact a parking fee increase would have on them.

Here’s a sample of what respondents said:

- 70% of respondents drive to campus most of the time. Why?
  - 69% of those folks cited time and scheduling constraints such as: job and family commitments. For many, the commute time on public transportation would take substantially more time and offer much less flexibility.
  - 11% said that public transportation is not accessible and 20% said public transportation would cost them more.
  - Other respondents cited safety as a major factor.

In response to questions about how a parking fee increase would impact them, over 2/3 of respondents indicated that the proposed changes would have a clear impact on their finances and their time.

- 41% said the financial impact of a parking fee increase would be major for them;
- Another 29% said it would be significant
- 33% believe that it would have major impact on their time or workday (come to campus less often, allow more time for commute, etc.) another 29% said it would have significant impact.
Wesley Blixt, Co-Chair:
According to Wes, he’s been around UMass forever – well, at least since 1968. He came to the area “in search of Marxist economics, an emerging communal scene and an opportunity to spend the rest of his life sitting on the front porch drinking Rolling Rocks and playing guitar with friends.”

From the sound of it, he didn’t stay put on that porch for too long – enrolling in two different graduate programs, working as an investigative journalist and teacher, writing a novel - all before taking a job with the UMA Extension, later Outreach, programs. When the Outreach program was no more, Wes began working for the UMass Amherst News Office, handling internal communication. He continues there today. Looking back over the many things he’s done, he says that his proudest accomplishment, aside from his investigative reporting, was co-producing a three-day academic symposium at UMass Amherst titled “Unbroken Chain: The Grateful Dead in Music, Memory and Culture.”

In answer to why he’s taken on a leadership role with the PSU, Wes says, “I really believe that we have an opportunity to do nothing less than change the culture of work on our respective campuses.” He would like to tell the administration that their job is to “enable staff by providing critical tools and support . . . to build the kind of organic consensus that makes work meaningful, innovative and (sometimes) fun.” He worries that “Instead, fear has become the dominant management tool on this campus, and control (not innovation) has become the goal.” He believes that the union needs to push back against that.

Wes cautions that we should not be lulled into becoming a “company union.” “We need to form strong and mutually beneficial relationships with our brothers and sisters in other unions. And we need to open ourselves up to our members and promote transparency before we are asked to or forced to. The experience of Chicago and Wisconsin have shown us need to join together and be ready to fight if need be. Public unions are showing that they are no longer the pussy cats of the labor movement. We are ready to roar.”

Joanne Levenson, Co-Chair:
Joanne comes to her role as Co-Chair of the Amherst Chapter with a strong background and a variety of experiences with labor. She has a Master’s degree from the UMass Labor Relations and Research Center with a focus on employee participation.

Joanne has been an active leader in the PSU on the Amherst campus for years. She was part of the original organizing campaign that led to the creation of the UMass professional staff union in Amherst and in Boston. After helping to found the union, she served as a member of the Joint Executive Board of SEIU 509 (the PSU’s first union) for three terms. She has been a member of two contract bargaining teams and was a founding member of the UMass All Union Labor Coalition. And, as if that weren’t enough, she has served on the PSU’s Family Issues and Sick Leave Bank Committees for seven plus years. Clearly, Joanne brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to her new role.

From her long involvement, Joanne also brings perspective about the challenges and opportunities the PSU will face in the next few years. When asked what she saw as the big challenges and opportunities, she said, “I ran as an activist and I remain committed to increasing membership participation, involvement, and representation in the governance and the direction of PSU. This agenda is both a challenge and an opportunity.” Asked what one piece of advice she would give to UMass upper administration, her response was simple: “Unions are needed.”

In her work life on the campus, Joanne has always been in the Student Affairs area. For the past several years she has been the Director of the Office of Family Resources program.

When not busy with work or union business, Joanne says that you can find her reading a novel, taking a walk with her dog or driving her teenage son to his soccer and tennis matches.
Wendy Wilde, Treasurer:

Wendy has been on the UMass Amherst campus since 1980. She has held three different positions, working her way up from the classified unit to the professional. She is currently the Department Administrator for the Sociology Department. In that role she wears many different hats. She oversees the daily operations of the department, advises students, co-teaches a career course, manages the budget, schedules courses, writes for and maintains the department’s website and supervises the staff. Through her years of experience on campus, Wendy brings a diverse viewpoint while also bringing new energy to the new leadership of the PSU.

When Wendy became a member of the professional staff, she found the time and commitment to serve on a number of union committees, including being a member of the Health and Safety committee and Program Committee. In addition to her committee work for the union, Wendy served as a union steward and then chair of the Salary Administration Program Committee. In her new role as Treasurer, Wendy has taken on a lot. Not only is she Treasurer for the UMass Amherst chapter, she is also serving as Treasurer for the Joint Executive Council which oversees the business and finances for our local. About her new role, Wendy says, “I am getting up to speed, albeit slowly, learning the many policies, procedures and accounts that keep the union running. Wendy says she is thankful (as we all are!) that the PSU has wonderful support staff—Amanda, Diane and Melissa—who have been crucial to her transition.

Kenn Hannah, Grievance Officer:

Kenn has worked on the UMass Amherst campus since 2003. He works as a Telephone Switch Engineer for OIT/Telecom Services. Before coming to UMass, he enlisted and served in the U.S. Air Force for six years. He also worked at Bell South at one time, but left that good paying job when management would not hire him as a CWA Union Member.

It seems like union activism is in Kenn’s blood. He describes himself as a “proud second generation union activist. His father was a carpenter and a member of Local 94 of the Carpenters Union for over thirty years. Kenn says that he “gets his tenacity and his belief in workers’ rights” from his father. As Grievance Officer, Kenn is carrying on a family tradition. His dad was also a site steward for his union.

One of Kenn’s goals as the UMass Amherst PSU/MTA Grievance Officer will be to try to resolve workplace conflicts at the first step in our grievance process,” but be assured, he says, that he “will go beyond the first step to represent you using every step of our PSU grievance process to work through the chain of command as necessary.” Tenacity in action!

Kevin Skelly, Recording Secretary:

Kevin Skelly has been working at OIT Help Services for about thirteen years. Throughout those years, he has always tried to maintain some level of involvement with the union.

His involvement has taken many forms. He has served as a PSU Delegate. He provided an enormous service by working to maintain the PSU mailing lists, website and other electronic communication resources for the UMA PSU. He has also served on the contract bargaining team.

In his new role as Recording Secretary, Kevin says that it is his “intent is to double down on those efforts, in support of better overall communication within our union.” He intends to “push for good communication policies and procedures” to improve communication channels and he will oversee the overall organization of all of the UMA PSU’s information resources.

Speaking of communication, what Kevin would like to communicate to PSU members is that the union leadership needs your help and involvement to make the union great. As he put it, “With finite resources of time and energy, in the face of seemingly limitless challenges to our organization, the efforts of your elected representatives are merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of all that needs to get done. Our efforts are significantly supported and extended by the Delegate Council, and our various committees. I urge all PSU members to find ways to get involved. Come to Delegate Council or Chapter Board meetings; join a committee. Every little thing you can do will help, and together we can make the difference between a good union and a great one.
DEAR MISS MANAGEMENT: THE DEFINITIVE SOURCE OF YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

Dear Miss Management,

I am a professional staff employee at UMass. It is 3:00 on a Saturday afternoon and I am sitting here in my office trying to plow through days’ worth of accumulated work items and emails that built up over the last week after I was assigned to complete a special report. I can assure you this isn’t the first and won’t be last time I’m donating my weekend or evening to “the cause.”

When I was griping to one of my colleagues about the fact that I was going to have to spend yet another weekend getting caught up with my regular work, after having already put in more than a full week of work last week, she went on for quite some time about the problems many of us are facing with too much work and not enough time and how we need to organize and deal with the issue. Then as she was winding down, she told me that she certainly hoped I was at least getting “comp time.” I just smiled and grunted at her. I didn’t want to let her know that I’m not and that I don’t really know much about this “comp time” thing.

I know that when I had to work a weekend open house, we were given time on the books for that. But what if I am putting in all these extra hours to keep just to keep up with my regular job? Do I have a right to claim comp time for that? Can you enlighten me, please? I’d feel a little better to know that in exchange for giving up this beautiful Saturday, I could count on some time down the line.

Sincerely,
Miss My Weekends

Houston, we have a problem. Let me be sure that I understand. You are regularly working weekends and evenings beyond your scheduled hours because you have too much work?? And I’m willing to bet you’re one of those people who wouldn’t know a lunch break if you tripped over it. And would I be wrong if I guessed that you are one of those people who never take all your vacation time or personal days because the time is just never right? How does that shoe fit?

Well, Miss Management will answer your questions, but not before I tell you that you need to get a life and your friend is absolutely correct! You are describing symptoms of serious over-work and that’s a huge issue. I can help you understand your rights here, but unless you deal with the larger issues at play, missy, you’ll be coming back to me again before you can even say compensatory time.

Now pull out your union contract so that you can follow along. Compensatory (comp) time is, quite simply, time that you get on the books for working beyond your regular hours. It’s basically hours in lieu of overtime pay, which most professional staff are not eligible to receive.

There are two types of comp time addressed in your contract. One is called “holiday comp time” and you can find out what that is in Section 21.7 of your contract. Short and sweet, it says that if you are required to work a holiday, you shall earn a full day of comp time in exchange. If you’re less than full time, it’s pro-rated. No ifs, ands, or buts on that one.

But the kind of comp time you are asking about is covered in a different section of the contract, Section 18.2. There it states that in “exceptional and limited situations” (cough, cough) members may be required to work longer hours than normally required or there may be “exceptional” (cough, cough) circumstances when workload is so burdensome that employees have to put in extra time. In those circumstances, employees are eligible for compensatory time.

Comp time is granted on an hour for hour basis; that is, it’s not time and a half. Comp time is not cumulative beyond 12 months. So if you don’t take it within 12 months, you lose it. And comp time MUST be okayed by your supervisor. Now sometimes when there’s a big event planned (like the open house you worked) or a special project coming up, your supervisor might approach you and say if you work this event or put in extra time for this project you’ll get “x” number of comp hours in exchange. But in your case, it sounds like you are being super responsible and trying to keep up with work, but you’re not really being asked by your supervisor to do that.

Comp time should be approved by your supervisor, preferably before you put in the extra time. Your contract says, “the employee and the supervisor shall discuss in advance whenever possible the need for unusually longer work hours and shall agree in writing that this work shall be governed by this provision and that documented work hours beyond forty (40) hours in a week will be treated as compensatory time earned.” So, you need to talk with your supervisor pronto to make sure she will agree (in writing) to comp time for any hours you put in. If your supervisor okays, then get your hours to your department’s timekeeper so that those hours get on the books.

Now let’s say that your supervisor tells you that she doesn’t think you need to put in the extra hours and will not approve comp time. For goodness sake, don’t just go ahead and work all those extra hours for nothing! If you two don’t agree, you contact your union representatives right away and discuss the issue with them. If your boss is still expecting that the work gets done and doesn’t offer you some alternatives for assisting with that – extra help or less work, for example - you may need union assistance in going after comp time or dealing with the workload issue.

Requesting and documenting comp time is important—not just to get you some time, but also because it is one tangible way that workloads can actually be monitored. Hopefully, if your boss sees that you are being over-worked, she will help make some adjustments to alleviate that. If not your contract does say that if you are consistently required to put in more hours than you are paid for more than three months (and this sounds like you), workload issues shall be reviewed. Talk to your union steward!

One last note dearie, it’s not enough to just get comp time; you also need to use it. You can’t take it with you and you can’t take it to the bank. Your supervisor is required to make “every effort” to allow comp time earned to be used, but you also have to make every effort to use it in a timely manner or you lose it. So if you’re having trouble using your other earned time... Just sayin’
MISS MANAGEMENT IS NOT GOING TO BE HAPPY ABOUT THIS

If you haven’t read Miss Management yet, do so now before reading this because then you’ll know how outrageous this is. And while you’re at it, you might want to send a copy of Miss Management to the UMass Amherst HR department.

UMass Amherst Grievance Officer, Kenn Hannah, reports that section 18.2 of the PSU contract—the section that governs compensatory time for professional staff employees—is being “widely misinterpreted” by UMass Amherst Human Resources.

When the issue first came to his attention, he thought it might be an isolated issue affecting a small group of employees, but as the union has investigated the issue, it turns out that there are staff members in almost every area on campus who have not been allowed to document the compensatory time they have earned. For many of them, it’s a substantial amount of time that they are “donating” to the University.

What the union learned is that many managers are filling out “time and attendance” sheets for their staff. While they will allow staff members to deduct time, they will NOT allow them to add any hours. Employees who were putting in as many as twenty extra hours a week were not allowed to record that time.

Seriously? What is with that? It seems that HR’s interpretation of section 18.2 was that a supervisor has the right to determine in what “exceptional” circumstances they would grant comp time. They were making that determination based on what actual tasks someone was doing (doing something outside your regular job) not on the extra hours that they worked. They even created a “special” comp time sheet (without bargaining with the union, by the way) that is so cumbersome, it makes it impractical for any department to collect all the signatures needed to approve comp time.

Needless to say…a grievance is in the works. Stay tuned.

BOSTON’S NEWEST CHAPTER BOARD MEMBERS

Last summer, the PSU Boston Chapter Board happily welcomed two new at-large members: Jim Allen and Tom McClennan.

We are pleased to introduce them to you!

Jim (at left in picture) has been at UMass Boston for sixteen years. He is the campus’ Greenhouse Manager/Horticulturalist - giving him one of the coolest offices on campus! He also has a UMass Amherst connection having graduated from that campus with a degree in Plant and Soil Science.

Jim first got involved with the PSU when he was one grievant in a large grievance that finally got the UMass Boston administration to recognize (and pay) employees who are required to be on call. (You can see more about that grievance in the July, 2011 Pulse.) Through that experience, Jim got bit by the union bug (no pun intended). He has been one of the PSU’s representatives to the UMB Health and Safety Committee (see more on page 13) and is a very active member of the UMB grievance committee.

Jim’s commitment to union activism stems from his concern that we need to address issues of equity and fairness in the workplace. Through his involvement, he is clearly helping to do just that.

Tom (on the right) has been with the Professional Staff at UMass Boston for six years. He is Applications Administrator in the UMB IT department—making him very much in demand across campus. He also graduated from UMB with a degree in Psychology and worked for the IT Service Desk before getting his permanent current position.

Tom has had a general interest in unions for quite some time—stemming from the fact that he has several family members who are/were union members. He became more involved to learn and do more in that area. Before running for the Chapter Board, Tom was one of the campus’ members that we could count on to turn out for union events—whether it was membership meetings or lobbying at the State House for funding for public higher ed. Funding for public higher education remains one of the issues that Tom is most concerned about.

PSU Boston is also hoping to exploit some of Tom’s talents to assist with union technology needs, including updating our website.

We are delighted to welcome both Jim and Tom to the Board and most grateful for their willingness to serve.
By Claudia Heske, PSU Boston

This past summer, the 37th UALE Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women took place at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. For five days, I met women from all over the northeast region who came together to get educated on labor history, learn about the power of collective bargaining, build up our leadership skills, and gain an immediate sisterhood over 100 strong. We were public and private sector workers, long-time members and officers in unions, or newbies to a union, like myself.

Everyday, we had a full schedule of attending workshops, plenary sessions, or getting acquainted over meals. Besides learning about our union power structures and the meanings of union acronyms in our daily Leadership Skills Workshop, we were able to hear about each other’s struggles in all our workplaces and about triumphs women have had when they’ve organized to fight back. In the four-day workshop on Collective Bargaining that I took, we role-played a contract negotiation. The simulated activity quickly became excitingly real when the fight for a fair contract in mock negotiations became our coursework. The negotiating process brought out a fire from my classmates that animated for me just how important it was to pin down contract language so that work conditions were protected for the majority of the membership. Other workshops included topics such as public speaking, building stronger union membership through blogging, how to handle grievances, and labor law.

At the beginning of each day, our plenary sessions gave us a chance to gather as a group, review the schedule, and be led in song by Bev Grant, who reminded us how much music can uplift and galvanize people into action. Many of the songs we sang that week were born in prior times of struggle, which helped me to make the connection between history’s events with today’s realities. It is especially fitting that this year’s summer school commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Lawrence Massachusetts Textile Strike of 1912. The stark inequalities that precipitated the Bread and Roses Strike disconcertingly resound today, so our discussions about this labor history and the Occupy Movement and about the wars being waged on our rights to collectively bargain became remarkably linked.

Many times throughout the conference I was touched by the stories I heard from the women around me and by the history that framed every lesson we were learning. Labor History Night was particularly moving, not only because it was the last night of the conference, but also because it highlighted the struggles of women who came before us, and laid bare just how relevant the fight for labor rights is for us today. Wendy Wilde from UMass Amherst captured the feeling of Labor History Night on the Summer School blog. She wrote, Labor History Night started with Sister Bev’s music and Sister Donna’s slide show as backgrounds to stories of our sisters’ victories and earlier struggles... An emotional tribute to Sojourner Truth started us off. Half her life was in bondage and the second half as “free” woman, but her freedom was not gained without much sacrifice. What followed were other powerful woman’s voices whose lives were entrenched in a fight for respect and rights. I loved how the song lyrics, Underground Railroad, Which Side Are You On, Bread and Roses, Sticking to the Union gave the voices strength as their stories were read. The horrific line “hearing the bodies drop with a thud” gave me a sick feeling in my stomach as the story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in New York City was read. Simply an absolutely empowering yet emotionally charged evening.

That final night at summer school, I became acutely aware of the power that organizing and union building has. Through my experience at summer school, I became an active part of this galvanizing community of women who come together to learn our history as women and as workers, and to learn how to organize as such today. I look forward to next year’s summer school in Ithaca, New York and wish to see more sisters from UMass attend!

Claudia is the Program Coordinator for the Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity in the College of Science and Math at UMass Boston. She also serves as one the PSU Area Reps for the campus.

PSU members at the Summer School

From left to right

Wendy Wilde, UMA
Anneta Argyres, UMB
Claudia Heske, UMB
TO GRIEVE OR NOT TO GRIEVE

By Martha London
Grievance Secretary, PSU Boston

Many of you have found out to your dismay what it’s like to have a serious enough problem at work to make you consider asking the union for help. For those of you who haven’t, or haven’t yet, or are new to UMB, you may be wondering what exactly constitutes grounds for a grievance and how you approach the union about it.

A grievance could be:
- An unreasonable workload
- Being asked by your supervisor to do things that are clearly not in your job description
- Bullying of all kinds, either by a supervisor or a colleague
- Age, sex or race discrimination
- Having duties taken away from you, possibly as a prelude to a layoff
- No heat in your office for a week in the winter (this was an actual grievance!); also leaks and rain into offices and other unsuitable working conditions.
- Harassment by a faculty member
- Involuntary transfer to another position
- Improper layoff notice

And so on....

The point of the grievance process is to ensure that Management abides by the contract that the Professional Staff Union has bargained with the University. We have language in the contract that deals with workload issues, health and safety issues, comp time, salary equity issues within an office, and so on. Sometimes the contract language is very specific, sometimes it’s more general or vague, in which case the grievance stewards have to get creative!

There are four formal levels of a grievance, called “steps”. They’re outlined in Article 7 in our contract.

Step 1 is a fairly informal level, when the employee, with his or her steward, meets with the immediate supervisor to try to deal with the problem. This kind of discussion sometimes also involves someone from HR.

Step 2 is the more formal procedure at the VC and Chancellor level: it’s a formal grievance report submitted directly to HR by the union, on behalf of the member. There are deadlines associated with it.

Step 3 goes beyond the VC/Chancellor level to the President’s office, when the grievant is unsatisfied by the decision made at Step 2.

Step 4 is arbitration. If the grievance isn’t resolved to the satisfaction of the union and the grievant at Step 3, with the approval of the Joint Executive Council, the union can submit the grievance to arbitration. Arbitration can take a very long time, and an arbitrator’s decision is final and binding.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

If you need assistance from the union at UMass Amherst contact:
PSU Grievance Office, Kenn Hannah
Email: kenn@oit.umass.edu
Phone: 413-545-3095

If you need assistance from the union at UMass Boston contact:
PSU Grievance Secretary, Martha London
Email: Martha.london@umb.edu
Phone: 617-287-5338
OR contact a Grievance Committee member
See list at: www.psu-umb.massteacher.org
PSU FOR THE CTU

Read more about the CTU’s vision for public schools
On Wednesday, September 12, the PSU-UMB Chapter Board passed a resolution in support of the Chicago Teacher’s Union (CTU), that was then in day three of a seven day strike. The PSU Joint Executive Council also made a contribution to the CTU strike fund.

CTU President Karen Lewis explained that teachers and support staff went on strike to stand up not only for their rights as workers and union members, but also for students, families and for quality public education: “I think that teachers across the country realize how important it is to stand up as a union together and fight back against things that are actually bad for children. . . We’ve been micromanaged into doing things that we know are harmful for children. So, to finally stand up and say, you know, this is not a good way of doing school, because somebody in an air-conditioned building with a spreadsheet thinks that’s a good way of doing it, this has been a real victory.”

Garth Liebhaber, a fifth grade CTU teacher, described the impact of the strike: “We’ve gained dignity. We’ve gained respect for our profession and for our school communities. We have regained unionism and what it means for working people. Today, our struggle has not just been about simply a contract, because a contract is worthless unless there are people to enforce it. This has been about returning power to where it belongs: amongst the working people and the communities they serve.”

Learn more about the CTU’s vision for education at: http://www.ctunet.com/blog/text/SCSD_Report-02-16-2012-1.pdf

PSU-UMB RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION

The Professional Staff Union-Umass Boston/MTA offers their full support to the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) in a fight that is about much more than a contract for the 26,000 CTU members.

By demanding reduced class size, broad educational content (including such things as physical education, art, and access to libraries for each student), anti-racist policies and practices, and respect for education workers, CTU is standing up for students and public education everywhere. This is the time for everyone in labor to stick together and speak with one voice. PSU-UMB pledges its support to the women and men of CTU.

We stand with them and will support them in any way that we can.

HEY BOSTON! CAN WE HEAR YOU? DO YOU HAVE AN AREA REP?

PSU Area Representatives help make sure that your voice and the voices of your co-workers get heard. Area Reps are members who agree to serve as the local face of PSU in their departments and other departments located near where they work. We have 22 areas on campus, each with about 25 members who work near each other, and we have elected Area Reps for 14 of these areas. We also have 3 Area Reps downtown at the Institute for Community Inclusion.

If you work in any of the following areas, you DO NOT YET HAVE AN AREA REP and we are looking for members to step up for these important positions.

- Clark Athletic Building – all professional staff
- Healey Library – all professional staff working on floors 2-5, 10, 11 (3 areas)
- McCormack – professional staff working on the 1st and 3rd floors
- Quinn – professional staff in Advancement, Alumni Relations, Communications, Public Safety
- Service Building—all professional staff

It is a very modest time commitment (two hours a month or less and only two meetings a year), and you are first to hear PSU news! Email us at prostaff.union@umb.edu if you are willing to try it out.

And welcome to our two newest Area Representatives:
Fatmata Jah – CAM2 (members located in Campus Center 1st floor offices
Michelle Browning – MCC2 (members located in McCormack 4th & 5th floor
Susan Connors—CAM 3 members on 2nd and 3rd floors Campus Center
Most faculty and staff probably don’t know of the existence of the university Health and Safety Committee. I know I didn’t until I got involved in the roof and resulting office problems on the sixth floor of Wheatley. I learned from that experience that H&S is the best venue to assuring a safe and healthy workplace of us all.

The Health and Safety Committee is a university committee composed 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**

The objectives of this committee include but are not limited to:

- Initiating discussion surrounding incidents and issues of concern
- Providing follow through of existing issues until adequately resolved
- Facilitating access to and dissemination of existing health and safety protocols and other educational information to the broader University community.
- Examining health and safety problems/issues and developing plans/procedures to address them
- 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.

Currently H&S is systematically, albeit slowly, addressing all of its objectives to one degree or another. Current concerns are clarifying procedures for dealing with infectious diseases, centralizing incident reporting information, and identifying potentially hazardous conditions on campus.

Next semester H&S is hoping to unroll a campus wide “Culture of Safety” campaign to make everyone on campus aware of the need for safety, to get everyone to recognize that accident prevention is a big part of a safe campus, and to make sure that everyone knows how to report any accidents, incidents, or hazardous conditions, and where to report them.

If you have any health or safety concerns, contact PSU Boston at prostaff.union@umb.edu. PSU Boston reps to the H&S Committee are Jim Allen, Michael Mahan and Tom McClennan.

This report was written by UMass Boston faculty member, John Hess, who serves as one of the Faculty/Staff Union’s representatives to the Health and Safety Committee.

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**AMHERST: COALITION AGAINST WORKPLACE BULLYING REPORT**

Over 2200 employees from all of the major unions at UMass/Amherst, as well as non-unit administrative and staff positions on campus, submitted information to an anonymous survey concerning workplace bullying. These data were then compiled and summarized by SAREO, the Student Assessment, Research and Evaluation Office here on campus. SAREO is an independent group with great expertise in survey analysis. The SAREO report is now being released (see below for links).

The results find that bullying at UMass is very similar to nationally reported levels of workplace bullying at worksites of all types. Sadly, the incidence is quite high, with more than 1/3 campus employees reporting that they personally experienced some kind of bullying. This frequency is also found at worksites that range from huge airplane manufacturing industries to banks to mom and pop shops. Workplace bullying is common and UMass is no different.

The way UMass can be different is to work to change our culture. Bullying occurs in complicated ways. Many behaviors represent bullying and it occurs between individuals of all types on campus (see the survey).

What is not clear is how to fix it. There are groups across the country trying to design systems to minimize workplace bullying, many with degrees of success. With cooperation from the Chancellor’s office, a group at UMass is engaging in finding ways to achieve that success here.

Read the report...
We are excited to introduce the new officers at Amherst and the new area reps and Chapter Board members in Boston. But we would be remiss if we didn’t also acknowledge and say thank you to PSU leaders who left their positions or finished their work in the last year.

A huge thank you for your commitment, leadership and dedication.

Clockwise from top center:
The PSU Negotiating Team – UMA/UMB
Kathy Rhines/Bert Szala, UMA
JoAnne Martone/Kathy Rhines, UMA
Maxine Greenblatt, UMA
Jack Hirsch, UMA
Carolyn Nelson, UMB
Tess Ewing, UMB

KEEP THE PULSE GOING!

Do you have a question for Miss Management, an opinion you’d like to share or an idea for a story? We plan to publish two printed and two electronic editions of THE PULSE each year. To keep THE PULSE going strong, we need your ideas, opinions, criticisms, and suggestions.

If you have something you’d like to submit for publication or an idea about what you’d like to see in THE PULSE, please let us know. And, even better, if you’re interested in working with the newsletter committee, we’d love to have you!

Contact THE PULSE at:
Prostaff.union@umb.edu

PSU-AMHERST MTA/NEA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Wesley Blixt, Co-chair
Joanne Levenson, Co-Chair
Kenn Hannah Grievance Officer
Wendy Wilde, Treasurer
Kevin Skelly, Recording Secretary

PSU-BOSTON MTA/NEA

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