

PHENOMenal News

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2

Fall 2012

Adjunct Faculty Victory at UMass Lowell

by Ellen Michaud Martins, UMass Lowell

On May 18, 2012, the Adjunct Faculty at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell overwhelmingly ratified their first-ever union contract—between the University and United Auto Workers Local 1596. In voting to ratify, the adjunct faculty made history at UML and became part a growing trend of unionization in academia by adjunct professors.

The situation at UML, where 64% of faculty are adjuncts, reflects a national trend. An advocacy group for adjunct and contingent faculty, the New Faculty Ma-

jority, estimates that 73% of all college instructors are adjuncts—up from 22% in 1970.

The Union could not have won its first contract without the full support of the UAW, a small group of full-time faculty and friends at other UMass campuses. PHENOM was a supporter, as were unions on other campuses who stood in solidarity with the adjunct faculty as well.

The students at UMass Lowell were vocal supporters of their teachers. They saw them in the classroom eve-

ry day, doing the same work as full-time instructors, and knew them to be committed, caring professionals.

Adjunct faculty without unions work for near-poverty wages with no benefits and no job security despite the fact that at UMass Lowell the large majority of part-time faculty hold advanced degrees and teach on all levels from introductory freshmen through graduate level courses.

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Advocacy Day Infects State House with Higher Ed Fervor



Melanie Mulvey from UMass Amherst makes the case for better higher education funding in Boston.

Over 500 students, staff and faculty from almost every one of the public campuses came to the State House on March 8, 2012 with a simple powerful message: Public Higher Education is critical to the residents of Massachusetts, to our economy, and to our future, and must be adequately funded.

“Costs have risen dramatically,” said **Melanie T. Mulvey**, 21, a senior at the Amherst campus. “It’s really hurting the university and the state. Low-

income students are some of the people who need these opportunities the most because education really levels the playing field.”

All the sponsoring organizations agreed on a simple message, to ask the legislature to take two steps with the FY 2013 budget, increasing the campus operating budgets by 5 percent (and including the collective bargaining reserve proposed by the Governor), and increasing need-based

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Nothing As Certain As Debt and Taxes

by Ferd Wulkan

The Massachusetts class of 2010 (public and private 4-year colleges) graduated with an average debt of \$25,541, 12th highest among the 50 states. 63% of students graduated with some amount of debt, 16th most among the 50 states. Among public 4-year colleges, Westfield State had the highest percentage with debt (75%) with UML and UMD right behind (74%). Pell grants, which in 1980 covered 69 percent of public college costs, now cover less than 35 percent. In addition to destroying credit and affecting the ability to hold a professional

license, if you have federal student loans, the government can seize tax refunds, and garnish wages and Social Security payments. So far this year, the government has garnished the Social Security checks of 115,000 retirees. Typical student loan borrowers with average consumer debt were not likely to qualify for the average mortgage.

And the Department of Education reported that 13.4 percent of borrowers whose loans entered repayment between Oct. 1, 2008 and Sept. 30, 2009 had defaulted within three years.

While the default rates are highest at for-profit colleges, they are very high for public *Continued on page 7*

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Focus on Diversity Updates PHENOM Agenda

by Lisa Field

At the annual Delegate Assembly, held at UMass Boston in June, a group of delegates brought forward a proposal to increase diversity and representativeness in PHENOM.

They cited several reasons for focusing the organization on diversity issues.

1. PHENOM's credibility as the voice of Public Higher Education in Massachusetts depends on being representative of the full range of diversity of our communities.
2. Many issues that have impacts for people of color, women, and other communities are the issues PHENOM works on.
3. Women, people of color, and other marginalized communities are chronically underrepresented as decision makers—like the ones who have underfunded our campuses and helped create an affordability and access crisis.

After a lengthy discussion, a vote was taken to form a Diversity Committee charged with presenting a unified proposal for a bylaw change, guided by the concerns expressed at the annual meeting. This proposal was presented to the membership in mid-August.

Even though a proposal to mandate strict representational quotas for women, people of color and LGBTQ people on PHENOM's Board was defeated after extensive debate, PHENOM's Delegate Assembly did adopt a number of important measures.

The group affirmed that it is the responsibility of all members, including members of the Board, to actively recruit, organize, and network with women, with people of color, with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Queer (LGBTQ) people, and with low income people. Support caucuses were identified as means to achieve greater diversity.

A nomination and membership committee is to be established and given the charge to develop criteria and standardized procedures for the nomination process. This is in order **Continued on page 5**

We are extremely grateful to the **Massachusetts Teachers Association** for printing this issue of *PHENOMenal News*.

PHENOMenal News is published twice a year. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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COULD THIS BE THE YEAR WE WIN PROGRESSIVE TAXES?

by Max Page

First, the bad news.

Once again, when all the dust settled on the budget, the Governor and Legislature pushed through takeaways from public employees and continued to underfund public services, all the while refusing to ask the wealthiest members of the Commonwealth (who have been getting much wealthier) to contribute a bit more to the Commonwealth.

PHENOM helped win some modest victories, such as pushing successfully to get the public higher education contracts funded, and some increased financial aid. But no progress was made toward reversing the cuts of the past decade.

But now the good news.

Because of a steady drumbeat of pressure, including from PHENOM, it is clear that there will at least be an open debate on Beacon Hill about raising taxes in order to fund important public needs like public higher education.

After twenty years of tax rollbacks,

Massachusetts may finally be ready to have a conversation about the need for taxes to fund the kind of society we want.

Although we won't hear a word from politicians until after the election, it has been widely whispered that when the new legislature opens in late January, there will be a number of proposals for new revenues, with one perhaps even being put forward by the Governor himself.

PHENOM was one of the first organizations to sign on to the Campaign for Our Communities. Last year this coalition put forward An Act to Invest in Our Communities.

The proposed law was designed to raise significant revenues, \$1.5 billion a year, quite progressively. People higher up on the economic ladder would contribute the lion's share of that increase, and it would be done without seeking a constitutional amendment (something which has failed five times in the past).

It is unclear precisely what bill the Coalition will file in January, but PHENOM Board members who met with the

Campaign leaders recently were reassured that whatever is filed will, in some central features, resemble the original Act to Invest in Our Communities.

PHENOM has a crucial role to play in this effort. By holding campus events about inequality and tax fairness, PHENOM can help build a campus-based coalition in support of progressive taxation. We have to harness the power of the 29 campuses and the hundreds of thousands of students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni who make up our public higher education system.

If we are successful, perhaps next year we won't have to settle for a few scraps from our elected leaders who repeatedly claim that "there is no money."

Progressive taxation will draw money from where it is not needed—the boats and yachts of the Commonwealth's super rich—and bring it to where it is needed: homeless shelters, parks, senior centers and, yes, public colleges and universities.

SUMMIT SUCCESS

by Ken Haar

The Public Higher Education Summit Group has just completed its first full year of standing up for public higher education with some notable actions and victories to its credit.

PHENOM convened the summit in January 2011 as an attempt to get all the advocates of public higher education in the same room to support the fiscal 2012 budget proposed by the Board of Higher Education.

The group really took off last fall with a successful amendment to the casino bill to put 5% of annual casino tax revenues to work to support public higher education! This soon led to battles to add funds to the 2013 operating budgets of the campuses. Increased financial aid was another priority.

The summit group consists of representatives from the Higher Education Committees in the Legislature, from the Public Higher Education Caucus, from the Secretary of Education's office, from the Commissioner of Higher Educa-

tion's office, from the Councils of Presidents of the Community Colleges and State Universities, from the UMass President's office, from the higher education unions, from campus and statewide student groups, and from PHENOM.

Throughout the spring, the summit group focused the budget battle on three issues: 5% increases in campus budgets, increased financial aid funding, and to have the state, not the campuses, fund the collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the Board of Higher Education and UMass Trustees. After organizing in March the largest statehouse lobby day in memory—consisting of over 500 members of all segments and constituencies in the public higher education system—the summit group was successful with two of our priorities. The legislature supported \$4.5 million dollars (a 5.23% increase) in new financial aid spending and passed a budget that included the funding for collective bargaining agreements.

This fall, the summit group continues to push a strong agenda for making public higher edu- *Continued on page 5*

In February of this year, Quebec students began an unlimited general strike to oppose a tuition increase from \$2,168 to \$3,793 between 2012 and 2017 announced by the Liberal government of Premier Jean Charest. In October, following massive demonstrations and the resignation of one education minister and then another, Charest and his government were defeated in elections. In its first cabinet meeting on its first day in office the new Parti Québécois government repealed the tuition increase. The new Premier said she will not decrease funding for universities and will convene a summit on how to fund universities within her first 100 days as premier – without raising tuition by more than the rate of inflation.

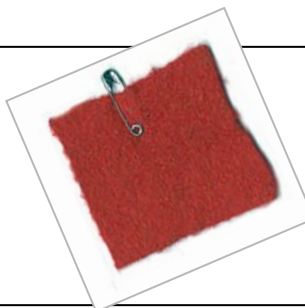
What caused these dramatic events?

The strike started on February 13, 2012 at Université Laval and it quickly spread throughout the 2- and 4-year colleges in the province. On March 22, 310,000 students were on strike, and 300,000 people marched in the streets. On May 18 the Government passed an emergency law that tried to limit how protesters could demonstrate. In what has been called "the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian History," between 400,000 and 500,000 people marched in downtown Montreal on May 22. Everyone wore small red squares of cloth. Summer did not stop the strike, and in October the protest brought down the government.



PHENOM helped host 2 students from Quebec on several campuses in the spring. RICHARD HINTON, a master's student in sociology at Concordia University, is a councilor for Concordia's Graduate Student Association. He has been active in mobilization and actions relating to tuition and university governance. ALEXIA LEWIS ST-PIERRE graduated in a multidisciplinary program at Université du Québec à Montréal and was the executive member responsible for sociocultural affairs at CÉGEP de Maisonneuve.

Red felt squares were worn by students opposed to tuition increases and their supporters, and were seen on many monuments and in windows of schools, businesses and homes.



This is not in a far-away place or far-off time. This year, 300 miles away, hundreds of thousands of people endangered their educations and repeatedly took to the streets to preserve tuition that seems unbelievably low by U.S. standards.

Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, a spokesperson for CLASSE, one of the leading student organizations involved in the protest, explained "This straightforward demand was always placed within the context of a broader critique of austerity measures, and a broken system that places the interests of the rich ahead of those of the majority of

the population. Although the hike has been defeated for now, the broader struggle against this austerity agenda continues. Our governments persist in slashing taxes on major corporations (tax cuts that have failed in their stated goal of stimulating the economy and creating jobs). Meanwhile they plead poverty when it comes to funding critical social programs like education and healthcare."

Sound familiar? We have a lot to learn from our neighbors to the north. Montreal is just 300 miles away but a world apart when it comes to politics. Students (and unions) there have a sophisticated understanding

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HE Advocacy Day—cont'd from page 1



The gallery of Gardner Auditorium at the Massachusetts State House was overflowing on Advocacy Day for Higher Education March 8, 2012.

Photo credits: Massachusetts Teachers Association.

financial aid by five percent as well.

Students and faculty came from the community colleges, upset by the Governor's proposal to centralize authority and narrow the mission of community colleges.

Katie McDermott, a Mass. Society of Professors Board member from the School of Education at UMass Amherst, said "It was inspiring to hear the students in our group explain the financial barriers they face. They are our best advocates for public higher education."

A lot of different groups worked together to make the Advocacy Day a success: student government leaders in SAC—the Student Advisory Council to the Board of Higher Education, the Center for Educational Policy and Advocacy at UMass Amherst, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the Public Higher Education Caucus of the Legislature, the administrations of the Community Colleges, State Universities and University of Massachusetts, and of course PHENOM.

PHENOM Invites You to Caucus

PHENOM members:

I hope this message finds you well. This is a call to invite PHENOM members to create special interest group caucuses.

Caucus groups can/may exist as organizing groups that would have the support of the larger organization. The goal of caucuses would be self-defined. The caucuses would provide an informal way for members with shared interests to discuss common issues, and to explore potential campus or statewide action collaborations.

Caucuses may include but are not limited to:

- Student Caucus
- People of Color Caucus
- LGBTQ Caucus
- Low Income Caucus
- Women's Caucus

If you are interested in starting a Caucus, do so. PHENOM does not want to dictate caucus agendas but wants to provide administrative and other support where needed. If you have any questions, email me at martinezrenuncio@gmail.com.

Vanessa Martinez

Focus on Diversity—Cont'd from page 2

to present diverse slates of candidates to fill vacant seats. The committee will also monitor PHENOM's progress in recruiting, organizing, and networking with under-represented constituencies.

The annual meeting and Diversity Committee discussions identified actions the Board can take immediately to make PHENOM a more welcoming organization. Producing basic materials in Spanish was identified as a priority. The Board was encouraged to create a fund to mitigate transportation and childcare costs.

The Board plans to schedule training for itself and plan membership activities focused on enhancing diversity and on organizing around the issue of access to public higher education.

Work that PHENOM has done in the past to establish collaborative relations

with other groups addressing access issues should be reinvigorated.

In addition to progress reports and anti-oppression training, the Board will appoint an Ombudsperson or equivalent committee to whom concerns about cultural insensitivity can be brought.

A system of accountability and responsiveness, from grievance procedures to the formation of caucuses, is intended to help the organization achieve its mission. Finally, the Board is mandated to appoint a subcommittee to bring the bylaws into alignment with this plan.

The members of the Diversity Committee included Stephenson (Hollywood) Aman, Lisa Field, Marilyn Frankenstein, Marie Hedrick, Alex Kulenovic, Dale LaBonte, Stasha Lampert, Ryan Manita, Vanessa Martinez, Gillian Mason, Nicole Ouimette, and Max Page.

Summit Success—cont'd from page 3

cation a priority in the Commonwealth.

The group has been reaching out to a wide array of public higher education stakeholders to ask for input on legislation that the summit group can file. The ideas address funding mechanisms for the system, financial aid, student debt, and a way to make sure our campuses are adequately staffed with full-time faculty.

Input on possible legislation on these and other issues is being collected by the summit group and discussed at a Public Higher Education Assembly November 14, with the aim of filing bills in the new legislative session in January.



PHENOM has established a legislative intern position. **Aviv Celine**, a student at UMass Amherst, is an organizer and trainer with CEPA—the Center for Education Policy & Advocacy. She is excited that PHENOM has given her this opportunity.

UML Adjunct Union—cont'd from page 1

Challenges to Unionizing

Organizing adjunct faculty presents unique challenges. Unlike 9-5 workers, adjunct faculty do not share common work space or schedules. In order to make a living, most adjunct faculty hold positions in multiple universities, or work in their discipline in the private sector.

Many work three or more jobs. They are often overworked and stressed, and lacking any kind of job security. It was a scary prospect for many to associate with a union before a contract was signed.

Much credit goes to the early pioneer faculty members **Dr. Greg DeLaurier**, **Dr. Amelia Freedman**

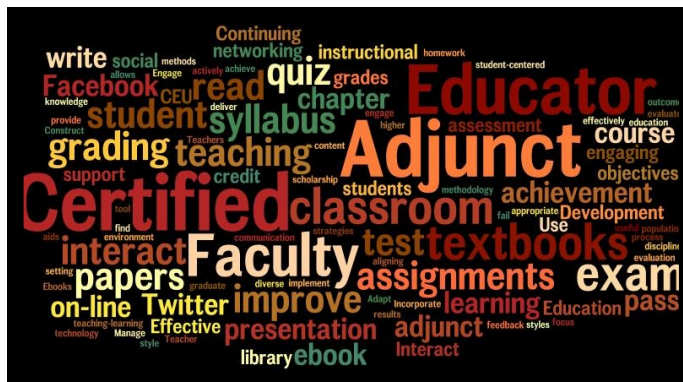
(now teaching at Merrimack College in Andover), **Dr. Eric Bourgeois**, who now teaches full-time at Bristol Community College, and **Teresa George**, Senior Adjunct Faculty in the Manning School of Business.

They realized they were creating a new union. This was not only new to UMass Lowell but was also a new concept—a stand-alone union of part-time faculty within the University of Massachusetts system. One of the catalysts for this action was that on the other campuses of UMass, part-time faculty were already organized, and had been represented by the faculty unions for many years. Those part-time faculty wages were significantly higher, with health benefits, a voice in governance in some cases, and some job security.

UM Lowell's Experience

In 2009, Dr. Greg DeLaurier, adjunct faculty in Political Science, began working with a small group of part-

time faculty. They spoke one-on-one, in person, to other adjuncts, inviting them to sign union cards. They explained that part time faculty were the majority at UML, with full responsibilities for class-design, teaching and grading. Yet they earned a fraction of a full-time salary. The faculty organizers also pointed out that adjuncts were unionized at the UMass system campuses in Amherst and Boston. Those faculty members were al-



For more on the problem of adjunct and contingent faculty nationally, please read the white paper *Who is Professor 'Staff' and How Can this Person Teach so Many Classes?* by Steve Street, Maria Maisto, Esther Merves and Gary Rhoades and hosted by the Center for the Future of Higher Education.

PHENOM is a member of CFHE, a national advocacy organization for higher ed. The report can be found at http://futureofhighered.org/Research_Center.html.

ready earning significantly higher salaries and had some job security and benefits. As more faculty members joined in the effort, the Union of Adjunct Faculty at UML was certified on October 1, 2010.

Collective bargaining began in March 2011. After 15 long, tense, demanding months of bargaining, an agreement was signed, and overwhelmingly ratified by members in May 2012.

The Union did not, of course, get everything it wanted. Rather than part-time benefits, which adjunct faculty on other UMass campuses have, the University offered a Health and Welfare Fund. This is open to renegotiation in 2015.

Key victories in the first contract include significant raises (UML adjunct faculty had not had a raise for 10 years prior) office space, job security (not tenure) for long-term part-time faculty, professional

development opportunities, a grievance procedure, a statement of part-time faculty rights, a fair evaluation system, inclusion on department web pages, and more.

A Worthwhile Effort

The Union had to battle many foes, but the biggest was the perception that adjunct faculty aren't "real teachers," and therefore weren't real members of the academic community. This attitude was expressed both directly and indirectly throughout bargaining. The University was strongly opposed to any contract language that gave part-time faculty rights similar to those of full-time faculty, rights such as participation in department meetings, office space or inclusion on department web sites. Any form of health benefits and job security were hard-fought skirmishes.

The lesson from this victory is that change is possible through solidarity. In a large negotiating team, such as the one at UML, there was diversity of thought and inevitable conflict. But there was an overarching commitment to members that carried the team through.

The activists felt honored to work for this cause, one capable of improving the working conditions of so many faculty and enriching the learning environment of thousands of students.

Students Prevail—cont'd from page 4

of power, a refined politics of coalitions, and a determined militance we can only dream of.

Nadeau-Dubois goes on, "To be effective, we need a common front of social movements. One capable of fighting, and winning, a new battle each year. Our power comes from our numbers, and building a mass movement requires focus, selflessness alongside mutual support, and unity amongst movements."

Student Debt—cont'd from page 1

college graduates as well.

Student debt also affects middle-aged Americans. As of March 2012, the delinquency rate for borrowers ages 40 to 49 was 11.9 percent, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. In addition, as reported in *The Nation*, many students are forced to move back in with their parents after graduation, which further depresses the housing market. Public interest work is less affordable as people opt for higher-paying (but sometimes less rewarding) jobs in order to pay off loans.

The Nation reports on a few of the initiatives underway to address the problem: "Representative Hansen Clarke introduced a bill that would forgive up to \$45,520 in student debt after a borrower makes ten years of payments at 10 percent of income. The Occupy Student Debt Campaign is calling for a write-off of existing debt as well as free public higher education. Students in California are pushing an initiative that would make four years of state university free for all the full-time, in-state students who maintain at least a 2.7 GPA or do seventy hours of community service a year. Lost tuition would be paid for with a modest surtax on those earning more than \$250,000."

PHENOM believes that a national policy making public college free is a viable idea. The GI Bills made college free for millions of vets after World War II as well as more recently. This helped the whole economy and provided the benefits that come with having a well-educated citizenry. The cost of providing free higher education to all who want it is estimated at \$70 - \$100

billion. This could easily be paid, for example, by a financial transactions tax which would have the added benefit of inhibiting unproductive Wall Street speculation.

At the state level, we look to our politicians to take some steps to address the problem. Benjamin Franklin famously said that in this world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes. Were he alive today, he might say it's debt and taxes. And we believe we can't effectively address the problem of debt without addressing taxes. Massachusetts must raise sufficient revenue to adequately fund our campuses (and fund other important social services). With additional resources, campuses can freeze or lower fees. That's why PHENOM is linking a campaign for progressive taxation with our campaign against student debt.

Find Out More

- ◇ projectonstudentdebt.org/state_by_state-data.php
- ◇ www.usnews.com/education/blogs/student-loan-ranger/2012/10/03/student-debt-affects-generations-of-americans
- ◇ www.thenation.com/article/167690/end-student-debt#

PHENOM Board Member **Nicole Ouimette** organized a speakout on student debt at Holyoke Community College on October 19, 2012. In an interview with WWLP Channel 22 news in Springfield, Nicole said, "I'm working two jobs right now plus taking a really heavy course load and that's the reality for many of the students here. Many of the students take seven classes and work three jobs and that's a lot of stress."

LIKE WHAT YOU READ? WANT PHENOM TO DO MORE OF THIS GOOD WORK?

Your support allows PHENOM to advocate effectively for an affordable, accessible, high quality and well-funded public higher education system in Massachusetts. Please give as generously as you can by mailing your check to the address below or making an online contribution at www.phenomonline.org. On the website you can also learn how you can support PHENOM as you purchase books, supplies and gifts!

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Student Voting on UMass Board of Trustees

One of PHENOM's 5 principles is "Honor and expand democratic institutions of governance for public higher education." Consistent with that belief, PHENOM is supporting an effort to expand voting rights to all the student members of the UMass Board of Trustees.

Phil Geoffoy, PHENOM Board member and Student Trustee from UMass Lowell, explains:
"Massachusetts state law provides for each campus to have one student trustee, and out of those 5, only 2 get to vote. To me, that's an unjustified limitation on student input. At the end of the day, students are the most important constituency at the University, so to limit their input doesn't make sense to me."

It is worth noting that the students are the only members of the UMass Board of Trustees who are elected.