

# PHENOMenal News

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

SPRING-SUMMER 2010

## For a Great State of Mind

For the past 3 years, PHENOM has been fighting for adequate state support for public higher education in order to make it more affordable, properly staffed, and able to provide the quality education our residents deserve and our state needs.

We've had some successes, but Massachusetts lags even further behind most other states in these key measures:

- Average 2-year college tuition and fees 49% higher than the national average
- Half the national average in financial aid awarded
- Biggest cut in state appropriations of any state over the past

5 years (26%)

- A drop from 9th to 37th in state support per student in the past 6 years
- And still 46th in the country in per capita investment in public higher education.

times greater than the cost to the state of their education.

- \$1 in direct state investment in UMass generates more than \$8 in economic activity. For every 100 UMass jobs, over 90 additional private sector jobs are created.

• 85% of Massachusetts public higher education students stay in Massachusetts, work here and pay taxes after graduating.

### Let's Be Average

While some might react by throwing up their hands, saying "well, there's just no money", and hoping for better times, better politicians, or better luck, PHE-NOM decided to be

bolder and more ambitious. Thus was born the campaign For a Great State of Mind.

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**Elton Jhon daGraca** (in the UMass Dartmouth sweatshirt) won the March 8, 2010 Race to the Median - uphill to the State House - edging out racers from 10 campuses, all wearing #46, symbolizing Massachusetts' rank among the 50 states in support for public higher education. (photo: Don Williams)

This makes no economic sense when you consider that:

- The increase in earnings of Massachusetts college graduates over their lifetime is 9.4

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## INTERVIEW WITH STATE REPRESENTATIVE SEAN GARBALLEY



Rep. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) took the lead in forming a House Public Higher Education Caucus. It was launched with great fanfare at the Grand Staircase of the State House right after PHENOM's Rally For a Great State of Mind on March 8, 2010. PHENOM believes this is a significant step forward and interviewed Rep. Garballey at the State House on April 22.

**Q. Why did you decide to start a Higher Ed Caucus when there is already a Higher Ed Committee?**

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## TIDBITS

**Bike Ride.** **Elizabeth Stassinios** (Westfield State College) organized a PHENOM Bicycle Race to the Median on April 6. Coinciding with the student lobby day at the State House, it got some media attention and helped raise awareness of how Massachusetts stacks up against other states -- each rider wore #46. Her group was joined by riders from Middlesex Community College organized by **Mary-Jo Griffin**. Want to go on a longer PHENOM bike ride? Let us know if you are interested!

**Privatization?** Is that too strong a word to use when we talk about what's happening to "public" higher education in Massachusetts? The latest and perhaps most extreme example comes from **Bristol Community College** where, according to the Boston Globe, the college "is teaming up with a for-profit education company to offer classes in popular allied health programs, a first-of-its-kind partnership that will allow students to bypass waiting lists -- provided they pay double the tuition."

**The Next Generation.** PHENOM collaborated with Wellstone Action of Minnesota to run a weekend training for the next generation of student activists at the end of January. Non-stop workshops on Power, Grass-roots Organizing, Leadership Development, Messaging, Strategic Planning, and Grassroots Lobbying might have exhausted most people -- but not the energetic students who came from around the state!

**Catch a Plane!** We've been learning a lot of interesting things about taxes in Massachusetts. Such as....if you buy a car you pay a hefty sales tax, but if you buy an airplane, you pay none. Cigarettes -- yes, but smokeless tobacco -- no. And of course there's the fact that there have been so many tax cuts that state taxes were \$3.3 billion lower as a share of the economy in FY2008 than they were in FY1998.

## PHENOM Gets Around!

Here are a few of the places PHENOM has been since January:

At the request of the Department of Higher Education, PHENOM led a workshop on Leadership at the annual Student Leadership Conference.

PHENOM hosted receptions with **Gloria Steinem** at Westfield State College and **Nancy Folbre** at UMass Amherst.

We had meetings on a variety of concerns with Secretary of Education **Paul Reville**, the Mass Taxpayers Foundation's **Michael Widmer**, Congressman **John Tierney**, numerous college presidents, the Public Higher Education Information Task Force, members of the House Public Higher Education Caucus, and the MTA's Higher Education Leadership Council.

We co-sponsored a conference on public education with Citizens for Public Schools, were honored by the Center for Popular Economics, and made presentations to numerous community organizations.

We testified to the Joint Ways and Means Committee, rallied for in-state tuition, and met with legislators. We organized teach-ins and met with student governments and unions on numerous campuses.

We even discussed our work at the NEA/AFT Higher Education conference in California and the Labor Notes conference in Detroit.

*Everywhere, people are impressed by how much we are doing on such a small budget. Our passion takes us far, but imagine if PHENOM were well-funded!*

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Welcome to **PHENOMenial News**, published twice a year -- Fall and Spring -- to coincide with the school semesters.

We welcome your comments, and suggestions.

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

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## EDITORIAL: Who's Sharing the Sacrifice?

by Max Page & Michael Ash

"Shared sacrifice." You will hear the Governor say it every time he talks about the budget. Charles Murphy, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, used the same phrase when he unveiled a budget that cuts local aid -- schools, police and fire, libraries, parks -- by \$234 million, and public higher education by \$132 million. It was echoed by Michael Widmer of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Association when he endorsed the House's budget: "They [cities and towns] need to share in the pain given our fiscal realities."

"Shared sacrifice" must poll well in focus groups. But there is nothing shared about the pain in the state budget. Ask anyone in a position of power this simple question: *How are the most fortunate in our Commonwealth being asked to contribute to solving our common problem, namely an economic crisis and budget deficit?* The honest answer would be: *nothing*. There is nothing in the Governor's budget nor in the House's that demands any "shared sacrifice" from those most able to share.

Governor Patrick and Speaker DeLeo can repeat this stock phrase all they want, but the reality is that the budget is balanced on the backs of working families, schoolchildren, and college students, and the pain is shared only by those millions among us who lack political pull.

For a state that was at the forefront of the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Civil Rights revolution, Massachusetts is falling quickly behind the

times. People elsewhere are waking up to the idea that a robust public sector delivers what we need and cannot buy any other way, like clean air and water, and education from pre-K through college. People increasingly understand that we need fair and reliable taxes to pay for these public



March around the State House, March 8, 2010  
(photos: Ferd Wulkan)

goods. Massachusetts and America both expanded health insurance, but only the federal version pays for it with progressive taxes. Voters in Oregon voted by an 8 percent margin -- to raise the corporate income tax and to assess an income tax surcharge on the wealthiest citizens. In nearby New York, taxes on the wealthiest citizens are part of the solution to budget deficits.

Consider this: by simply restoring the tax rate on unearned income -- dividends and interest -- to 12%, where it stood until 1999, we can wipe away ALL of the local aid cuts proposed by the House, ALL of the cuts to public higher education, and ALL of the cuts to Mass Health, our state's health insurance program for the poor. Tax revenue from unearned income comes almost exclusively from people making over \$200,000 a year. Shared sacrifice, anyone?

The Governor and the Legislature have shown spectacular cowardice in the face of anti-tax zealots. Our so-called leaders whisper in hushed tones, "*They'll murder us at the polls if we vote for taxes. Taxes are off the table.*"

It is time for some anger and zealotry on our side -- the side that believes that we build our common wealth by investing in our schools and universities, by protecting the most vulnerable, by keeping our water clean and our libraries open. This budget season gives us a chance to show our children that our state has good values -- that we value schools and teachers and health care for the poor over continued tax breaks for the rich. That is the choice before our Governor and Legislature.

This year provides a critical test of whether any circumstances can push Massachusetts Democrats, who control the legislature and the corner office, to stand up for working people and the middle class. If our representatives are prepared to continue the destruction of our Commonwealth rather than asking the Lexus-driving class to help out, then they should expect to share in the sacrifice -- at the ballot box this November.

**Max Page and Michael Ash teach at UMass Amherst**



MTA Vice President **Paul Toner** addresses PHENOM rally March 8

## UMass Dartmouth is PHENOMenal by Colleen Avedikian

*Many campuses have been active with PHENOM this year. Each does things in its own way. In this issue we feature the work of the UMass Dartmouth campus in the hope that it may provide ideas to higher ed advocates at other campuses.*

For the members of our PHENOM campus council, it has been a very busy year at UMass Dartmouth! A small, but committed group of students and faculty was able to accomplish many things since September. As we gathered on April 21 for our weekly meeting to review our activities, we were quickly surprised by how much we did: a campus rally (October), two teach ins (November and March), and two call-in days (November and April). We also participated in a number of events: "The Expanding Access to Higher Education" conference at Framingham State (November), "For a Great State of Mind" Rally at the State House (March) as well as PHENOM delegate meetings throughout the semester (October, December and February). We even went off campus to meet with students and faculty at one of our neighbors, Bristol Community College.

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, we attended a Legislative Breakfast, co-sponsored by the UMD's Dubin Labor Education Center and the Greater Southeastern MA Labor Council to network with political leaders, union members, and local activists. A week later, we organized a panel discussion on the state of public higher education, featuring two

members of the recently formed Public Higher Education Caucus: Representatives **Michael Rodrigues** (D-Westport) and **James Arciero** (D-Westford). Rounding out the panel were Dr. **James Griffith** President of the UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895, and **Alex Kulenovic**, Field Organizer from PHENOM. This panel brought together a number of important perspectives regarding the lack of adequate funding for public colleges and universities in Massachusetts, as well as strategies to address the state's budget crisis.

At the start of the Fall 2009 semester, UMD PHENOM (as we like to call ourselves) set as its primary goal to make "PHENOM" a brand name at our campus. We tried to remain as "high profile" as possible through frequent tabling in the campus center, classroom visits, and networking with other groups on campus such as student organizations/clubs, faculty and staff unions and the Faculty Senate. We co-sponsored a voter registration drive and other events with MassPIRG. To increase our visibility, we had a weekly column in the campus newspaper, The Torch, and we maintained a Facebook group (UMD is PHENOMenal). We were fortunate that the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Crime and Justice Studies recog-

nized PHENOM as a legitimate organization for its students seeking internships for course credit. The contributions of the PHENOM Interns were integral to our successes this year.

As the semester winds down, we are discussing ideas for next year, including another Public Higher Education Panel discussion involving the larger community: busi-



UMass Dartmouth students Angela Pitt, Christine O'Connor, Sara Faulkner and Kristen DiPerri at the State House March 8 (Photo: Ashleigh Black)

ness, civic, and religious leaders. We believe that building alliances outside of our campus is an important step in convincing others that investing in public higher education benefits us all.

Thanks to our wonderful interns **Juan David Lozano**, **Jessica Ceravone**, **Askar Morisseau** and **Michael Costa** and other UMD campus council members **Angela Pitt**, **James Bazinet**, **Ana Gonzalez**, **Hadiza Iddrisu**, **Elton Da-Graca**, **Lia Carvalho**, **Knottia Carrigan**, **Kyle Regan**, **Justine Schemel**, **Andrew Pereen**, **Xiomara Moreta** and **Colleen Avedikian**.

*Higher education is critical to our children's success so we need to make sure our public colleges in Massachusetts are affordable and accessible. To me, this means supporting PHENOM's work by answering email alerts, inviting a PHENOM speaker, and contributing financially.*

Lisa Field, alumni and parent

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## For a Great State of Mind

The theory behind the campaign is that if we could just bring our data to the national average, we'd be far ahead of where we are now — and who can argue that Massachusetts should not be at least average!

If this campaign is successful, we could guarantee students a high-quality education with reasonable class sizes and a stable full-time faculty. We could turn financial aid into a tool of equal access instead of a stopgap against out-of-control costs. We could increase access for lower income families, people of color and immigrants, insuring that our campuses, our graduates, and our workplaces are as diverse as our state. We could grow our economy by giving more Massachusetts residents the skills needed to get high-paying jobs, spend more at local businesses, and pay more in taxes. We could take steps toward free community colleges, adequately funding them so they can be a pipeline to four-year colleges or fulfilling careers. We could give hard-working faculty and staff overdue raises and reasonable workloads, allowing them to better serve students.

PHENOM and our allies are currently gathering thousands of signatures on a very simple statement:

I ask every candidate for statewide and legislative office to endorse the following and to take steps toward making it a reality:

*Massachusetts must provide top-quality public higher education and must make it affordable for all. To these ends, the Commonwealth must ensure that **per capita spending on public higher education is no less than the national average**, and that **student costs are no higher than the national average**. Significant and measurable progress toward these benchmarks must be achieved by FY 2012.*

PHENOM is determined to make the crisis in public higher education an issue in this year's election campaigns. By presenting thousands of signatures, we expect every candidate for Governor, Lt. Governor, State Representative and State Senator will have to explain what s/he plans to do to alleviate this multiple crisis -- underfunding and overcrowding, understaffing and overcharging -- to get our state's priorities right.

**You can help** by sending this link [www.phenomonline.org](http://www.phenomonline.org) to everyone you know and asking them to sign the statement. Or you can circulate our informative signature brochures -- contact us at 413-577-4121 or [massphenom@gmail.com](mailto:massphenom@gmail.com) and we'll get them to you.

## Book Review: Saving State U: Why We Must Fix Public Higher Education

by Nancy Folbre (2010, The New Press) reviewed by Ferd Wulkan, PHENOM



**Nancy Folbre**, Professor of Economics at UMass Amherst and member of the UMass Amherst PHENOM Council, starts her just-published book by saying "The patchwork, make-do, halfhearted system we have for partially subsidizing higher education in the United States is both inefficient and unfair." She spends the next 180 easy-to-read pages illustrating and explaining how and why this is, and offering suggestions on how it could be different.

She discusses national issues, but her examples come primarily from Massachusetts. It's a must-read for anyone who is concerned about our public colleges, is involved in advocacy, or is just interested in why our system is so underfunded, inaccessible, and illogical.

Nancy ranges far afield with astute observations about financial aid, affirmative action, standardized tests, the business model of education, and taxation -- always guided by equal measures of her economic expertise, historical perspective and great sense of humor. She quotes a UMass Provost asking, "Why can't we run the university like General Motors?" While we may be glad that this administrator is no longer at UMass, the sentiments she expressed certainly are. More and more, faculty are asked to "generate revenue", students

Continued on page 6



Continued from page 1 **Interview With State Representative Sean Garballey**

A. Having graduated from UMass Lowell, I have been a strong supporter of our public colleges. Once I got to the Legislature, it was clear that even though the Committee chairs were supportive, there was no strong organized group of Representatives devoted to increasing statewide support for public higher education. I decided to form a Caucus to be strong advocates and leaders in the fight for increased access and increased state support. There is no time like now to build this coalition of legislators since it is more and more clear that the economy is driven by providing increased opportunities for young people.

*Q. What are the Caucus' short and long-term goals?*

A. Short-term, we want to increase the size of the Caucus and create something similar in the Senate. We need to fight hard in this budget for increased appropriations for public higher education in the budget. Long-term, we need to create a culture in the state where legislators and all the constituents of the public colleges work together to advocate for and to celebrate public higher education. We need the public to understand how important our public colleges are for the whole economy and for the students -- who come from all of the 351 cities and towns and 85% of whom stay in Massachusetts. I'd like to see an annual public higher education rally with advocates and legislators.



Members of the new Public Higher Education Caucus addressing PHENOM members. From left they are Michael Rodrigues (D-Westport), James Arciero (D-Westford), James Fagan (D-Taunton), Rep. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington), Rep. Ellen Story (D-Amherst), and Rep. Peter Kocot (D-Florence). (photo: Don Williams)

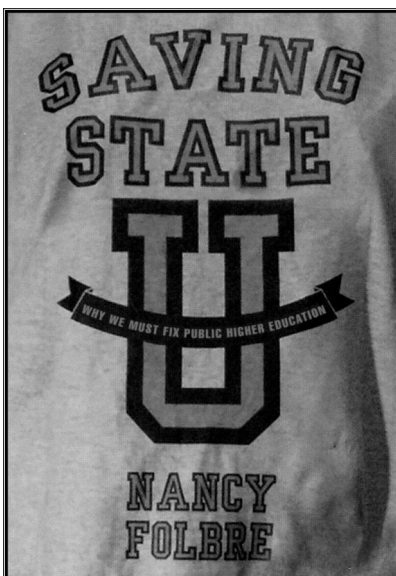
*Q. What do you see as the major challenges facing us?*

A. First, the state budget. We must raise taxes in order to be fair to all the important programs that are being cut -- not just higher education. We have to address the state's structural deficit.

Second, isolation. The campuses have a tendency to be in their own silos and don't always have a statewide perspective. We have to overcome that isolation and have all our advocates thinking system-wide, not just about their campus.

*Q. What do you think about PHENOM's role?*

A. We need strong advocacy groups to help create momentum. Uniting all the constituents is extremely important and PHENOM has shown the ability to do that. Legislators need visible activity on the ground -- this is

Continued from page 5 **Book Review: Saving State U**

are charged "what the market can bear", and the public land grant mission of the university becomes a quaint historical artifact. Nancy, being actively involved with PHENOM, does not take this as inevitable or unchangeable, and begins to lay out a vision for how things could be different.

My favorite chapter is the next-to-last one, called "Fiscal Hell". It is a very clear explanation and analysis of taxation and spending priorities in the country, particularly in Massachusetts, over the past 40 years. She analyzes the motivations behind and the impacts of Proposition 2½, the right wing assault on government, the over-reliance on property taxes, the lottery, and the grassroots tax revolt. Fortunately the book does not end here; the last chapter is called "Saving Ourselves" and offers us some hope.

We highly recommend this book. If you decide to buy it, please visit [www.phenomonline.org](http://www.phenomonline.org), click on "Buy Books and Support PHENOM". You can choose from among 6 vendors, all of whom have agreed to give a percentage of the proceeds to PHENOM.

## PLEASE SUPPORT PHENOM'S WORK

*The Commonwealth has all but abandoned its commitment to public higher education. Most people think of Massachusetts as a hub of higher education and are surprised to learn that Mississippi and Alabama each spend twice as much as Massachusetts on public higher education per resident. PHENOM is an innovative and effective voice for equitable investment in Massachusetts' public higher education system. As a university employee, I heartily support the organization's reform efforts, and urge faculty, staff, administrators and students to join me in contributing financially to support PHENOM in promoting forward-looking proposals for funding the state's colleges and universities.*

Jorge Luis González - Staff, UMass Amherst

PHENOM is the leading organization advocating for affordable, well-funded public higher education in Massachusetts. PHENOM unites students, faculty, alumni, staff, parents and community organizations to do grassroots organizing, policy analysis, and advocacy.

We rely on support from members of the public higher education community. With our *For a Great State of Mind* campaign, PHENOM is poised to have a much deeper impact in the coming years. We need your support to make this possible.

Please consider making a generous contribution to help PHENOM fight for the high quality public higher education system all residents of Massachusetts deserve. You can mail in your contribution or do it online by visiting [www.phenomonline.org](http://www.phenomonline.org).

If you would like to learn more about PHENOM, or about how you can join this growing movement in support of public higher education, please visit our website, write us at [massphenomonline@gmail.com](mailto:massphenomonline@gmail.com) or call 413-577-4121.

Thank you!

Your support allows PHENOM to advocate for an affordable, accessible, high quality and well-funded public higher education system in Massachusetts. Please give as generously as you can. You can mail your check to the address below or make an online contribution by visiting our website: [www.phenomonline.org](http://www.phenomonline.org). On the website you can also learn how you can support PHENOM as you purchase books, supplies and gifts!

Enclosed is my donation of: \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

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## **PHENOM ANNUAL MEETING**

**ALL PHENOM MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND  
JUNE 5, 2010 5 PM DINNER PROVIDED  
WORCESTER STATE COLLEGE  
BLUE LOUNGE IN THE STUDENT UNION  
RSVP TO [massphenom@gmail.com](mailto:massphenom@gmail.com) TO RESERVE DINNER**

At the Annual Meeting, PHENOM will review the past year, make plans for the election season and beyond, debate and vote on a bylaw amendment, elect a new Board, and discuss and approve a budget.

*The more people participate the stronger PHENOM will be!*

On April 15, PHENOM's Delegate Assembly endorsed a by-law amendment which the Board will refine and send out to all PHENOM members prior to a vote. It would increase the size of the Board and set up a regional structure for representation, with the goal of having more campuses and communities represented in PHENOM's leadership.

If you have not yet paid PHENOM dues this year, please send a check to PHENOM, PO Box 2281, Amherst, MA 01004 or pay online at [www.phenomonline.org](http://www.phenomonline.org) (you set your own dues amount) so you can participate in the Annual Meeting and PHENOM decision-making.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled to take place right after the Democratic State Convention at which PHENOM plans to have a major presence -- write to [massphenom@gmail.com](mailto:massphenom@gmail.com) if you would like to help staff a table with us.