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UMass Lowell employees protest massive layoff plan

UMass Unions United-Lowell is criticizing UMass Chancellor Jacqueline Moloney and UMass President Marty Meehan’s decision to lay off hundreds of campus employees, a move that drastically diminishes services to students

The union coalition will set up 200 empty chairs outside of the Manning School of Business, 72 University Ave., Lowell, at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, to represent those losing jobs, and speakers will address the harmful impact of these cuts.

The layoffs begin Aug. 1 for most, and campus administration has targeted more than 100 adjunct professors and 100 full-time campus staff positions, as well as cut approximately 1,000 jobs performed by graduate employees, students and temporary workers. This is in addition to more than 1,000 furloughs earlier this summer and the elimination of more than 112 vacant positions on a campus already short staffed.

The UMass Unions United-Lowell coalition said that losing all of these positions will disrupt the learning experience for many students and compromise the health and safety of those working on campus. The job losses are not necessary despite the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis and, according to the coalition, show a lack of leadership by UMass Lowell administrators who have not committed to any sacrifice at the top before cutting front-line staff, student workers, adjunct faculty and part-time employees.

The coalition is urging UMass administrators to use existing reserve funds and non-personnel cost savings as well as to advocate for additional federal resources to maintain the university’s current staffing level.

The coalition said that the current staff is needed to keep the campus safe and meet student needs.

“These cuts will be devastating to those who lose jobs that they have been dedicated to, to the students who are pursuing an education in these unprecedented circumstances and to the community that will see both opportunities at UMass Lowell diminish and feel the economic impact of layoffs,” the coalition said.