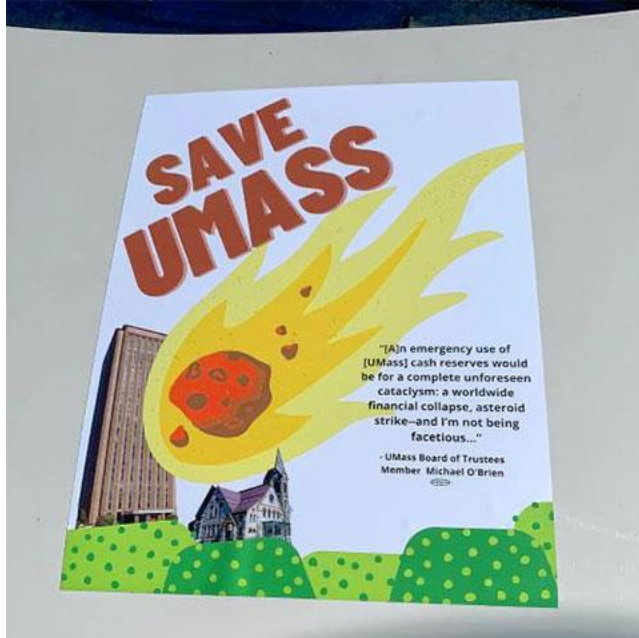


Dear USA Members,

Some great news— 54 USA members who were on furlough or hours reductions have been called back to work full time. Many returned to their former positions and a few others were re-deployed in COVID related positions (call center) or into vacancies that were approved to refill. There still remains 10 members with reduced hours, most are in the work-share program. Sixteen members are still on indefinite furloughs and 11 members on voluntary furlough. Thanks in large part to the solidarity and pressure on the administration provided by union members and the USA leadership.



Thank You to everyone who came to our “It Shouldn’t Take An Asteroid” event on campus and Zoom a week ago ([see TV news coverage of the event](#)). Special thanks to Jackie Bishop (USA Office Manager) for helping to organize this event, USA member Melinda Nielsen for speaking about her experience when on furlough; Treasurer Donna Vanasse who re-wrote lyrics to a popular song that was played on zoom and PSU member Alysha Desharnais who led the zoom with over 200 participants.

We had cars, trucks, and RVs making noise all over campus, while union

members placed a giant “asteroid” at the Mullins Center to highlight our message that **the emergency is here and it’s time to fully fund all programs and bring staff back.**

Per UMass Trustee Michael O’Brien: “An emergency use of [UMass] cash reserves would be for a complete unforeseen cataclysm: a worldwide financial collapse, asteroid strike—and I’m not being facetious...”

USA, PSU, MSP and AFSCME Union Leaders have been talking to the offices of U.S. Senators Warren and Markey, as well as a number of Massachusetts state senators and state representatives over the past few weeks to let them know that our university is not using the funding it’s receiving in a way that serves the commonwealth or nation. We appreciate all the support we’ve been receiving from them during this time, and those conversations are continuing this week.

UMass has millions in federal aid to help deal with the crisis, a fiscal year surplus, hundreds of millions of dollars in available reserves ... and zero excuses left for why they are keeping ANY staff on furlough or reduced schedules. It needs to be ZERO. It's shameful that the chancellor still won't commit to a pledge of no layoffs and all staff returned as soon as possible. **What is he waiting for?**

Through actions like these and signing our letter to the chancellor ([do this if you haven't already!](#)), we've made a lot of progress. But we're not done yet and won't give up until every member is brought back.



We should also mention that the administration has clearly now realized that their dangerous and ill-advised cuts to staffing left them unprepared to deal with a spike in residential COVID-19 cases. Residence directors, together with resident assistants, have been relentless in demanding safe staffing numbers in our residence areas. Over 130 people came to a meeting with UMass Environmental Health and Safety on March 3 to make their concerns heard—and they had plenty. Over 120 staff at UMass Amherst have been infected by COVID-19 at work since the pandemic began, there are

currently 205 active cases on campus.

Speaking of health and safety concerns, we were interested to see the [chancellor declaring in a recent television interview that he intends to “fully open in the fall.”](#) It probably goes without saying, but ... **“fully opening in the fall” safely will require full staffing at pre-pandemic levels.**

The money is certainly there. A recent inflow of federal aid, along with level funding from the state, has provided a **budget surplus for our campus**—backed up by what we've learned is **hundreds of millions of dollars in available funds** in the UMass system. The pressure is working, and vaccines are on their way, but we're not done! If you haven't yet taken BOTH of these actions, please do so right now:

- Sign this letter: [Chancellor: Now That There's Federal Aid and State Level Funding, It's Time To Bring All Staff Back.](#)
- [Share your voice](#) about the COVID experience in this survey for UMass Amherst students, staff, and faculty.

Together, we are stronger.