

Hello all,

The Impact Bargaining Team met from 9:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. yesterday (Friday, March 21, 2020) with a break from 1:30-4:00 so that I and other higher education leaders could be on a conference call at 2:00 with Secretary of Education **James Peyser**, Commissioner of Higher Education **Carlos Santiago**, and representatives from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Department of Public Health (DPH).

Yesterday, I asked you to invite MCCC members use this MTA tool to take action to protect our colleagues and students during this deadly pandemic; some colleges have not gone remote and need our support on those campuses: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/massachusetts-community-college-council-action/>.

For those who have yet to send their letter, *please use your personal email* not your college email. Also, it is much more effective when you personalize your letter as much as possible. It is important that the presidents see your individual stories, which are always more powerful than using someone else's words.

The intent of the MEMA/DPH call was to brief us on the latest developments and guidelines regarding COVID-19 and higher education institutions. Dr. Larry Madoff, Medical Director of DPH, said that they "know now that there is community transmission of this virus going on in the commonwealth throughout the state," and, "to prevent and slow the spread of the virus," in addition to moving on ground classes to remote learning, strongly recommended that colleges and universities "continue to pursue strategies to reduce the need for faculty and staff to be on campus." The call also made clear that the lack of test kits in Massachusetts remains a huge problem, with one person on the call hoping to test all 200 students about to return to the residences from spring break, but only has five tests kits available to him.

Even given the dire situation, there are victories that the Impact Bargaining Team achieved. We reached agreement on numerous items which will be sent to the colleges. Some of the highlights are the following:

- Professional Staff unit members' period of evaluation shall end on February 29, 2020 and will not be evaluated on work performed for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester.
- No evaluations for professional staff will cover work in the Spring 2020 semester performed after February 29, 2020. The Colleges shall not conduct or consider student evaluations for the Spring 2020 semester.
- No MCCC Day or DCE faculty unit member shall be required to teach on-line during this crisis but agree that faculty shall engage in remote learning consisting of multiple types of teaching modalities that may or may not include on-line teaching.
- If a faculty unit member does teach a course(s) online during this crisis, the individual faculty member retains ownership of all course materials.
- Part time employees will continue to be paid for the immediate foreseeable future. All part-time professional staff members will be encouraged to work remotely if the College determines that some or all of their work can be performed remotely for some or all of their scheduled work days. If a college has adopted restricted campus access (but isn't closed), and the unit member cannot perform their duties remotely, the colleges will continue to pay part-time professional staff if they are not assigned to work at the College until further notice.

There remain issues to be dealt with, and discussion of them in bargaining and/or Joint Study will resume on Monday, March 21, 2020, including the reality of some of our members living in neighboring states that have or may order a lockdown/shelter in place. The safety and health of our students, ourselves, and our colleagues continues to be the paramount issue. A great deal has changed since we started bargaining on Monday – shutdowns, changes in understanding of COVID-19, CDC recommendations, etc. Dr. Madoff noted in yesterday’s call that events are “changing, day by day, even hour by hour.”

The COVID situation in Massachusetts on March 8 (18 cases, no deaths) that invited colleges to suggest optimistically, and against all available evidence, that face-to-face classes after spring break may continue has deteriorated drastically. One just has to glance at the headlines in newspapers across to region to get a sense of how dire the situation is now (e.g. from this morning, “UMass to allow Worcester staff to reuse masks as supplies fall to critical levels”). While it is no doubt extremely difficult for some of us to complete our on-ground classes remotely, the alternative of putting our students and ourselves in harm’s way should not be a choice we make.

The deadly pandemic has placed everyone on uncertain ground. The advice I was given entering into these negotiations was this: “the last thing you want to do is push for something that leads to someone dying.” We on the Impact Bargaining Team recognize that the stakes here have never been higher. We will continue to do everything we can to make sure that our entire college community is safe and out of harm’s way.

Thank you everyone for taking the time to read this.

Please be safe and continue to stay healthy.

Best,

=====

*Margaret Wong, President*  
*Massachusetts Community College Council*  
*27 Mechanic Street, Suite #104*  
*Worcester, MA 01608*  
[presmwong@mccc-union.org](mailto:presmwong@mccc-union.org)  
(508) 560-5218