

UML and Adjunct Faculty Union Set to Negotiate Contract

The UMass Lowell administration and the UML Union of Adjunct Faculty, (UAF-UAW, Local 1596) are set to begin negotiations on a new contract.

Adjunct faculty at UML unionized in 2011 and were among the first of a growing number of Boston-area adjunct faculty to unionize. The Boston-area universities are part of a nationwide movement to address the concerns of adjunct faculty in higher education. Since 2011, adjunct faculty at Lesley, Tufts, Northeastern, and Boston University have all voted to unionize. A vote to unionize at Bentley fell two votes short of certification. Unionization is seen by many adjunct groups as a means to address the insecurity and low wages of contract employment, and to improve student learning conditions.

Dr. Gregory DeLaurier, an adjunct professor in the Political Science department and a member of both this year's negotiating team and the past team, is hopeful that this round of negotiations will tackle a number of issues important to the union. "I'm hoping that we will be able to reach a fair agreement in a reasonable period of time. I believe we can do that. We intend to listen to the administration's offers very seriously."

The New Faculty Majority, an advocacy group for adjunct and contingent faculty, estimates that 73% of all college instructors are adjunct, up from 22% in 1970. Adjunct faculty often work on a semester-by-semester contract, without benefits.

Tess George, an adjunct professor in the Manning School of Business and Communication Director for the adjunct union, says that a good adjunct contract can make the university stronger and improve the student experience. "When the employer supports and values employees, engagement and commitment increase. We are all committed to teaching our students in the most effective way possible, and hope to work with the university to ensure that adjunct faculty receive full support to reach that goal and fair compensation for our contributions. We hope to work together to make our university a better place to teach and learn."