

# MCCC News



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## Campus Debt Reveals Community Colleges Have \$1 Billion Backlog of Deferred Maintenance Costs

**A**fter an initial roll out at an April 14, 2022 forum, a group of MTA higher ed. activists released a report of their investigation into the hidden costs that the 29 campuses in the system face in debt service from building construction. Led by Prof. Joanna Gonsalves from Salem State University, their report looks at the history of state funding, the evolution to the current status of campus debt, and the impact on student costs.

Up until the early 1960s, Massachusetts and most other states fully paid for campus buildings including “boarding halls,” but that changed as student populations grew. The state legislature created the University of Massachusetts Building Authority (UMBA) to borrow money for “auxiliary buildings” such as residence and dining halls, athletic facilities. And it allowed for the university to raise funds to repay the debt from student fees. A similar Mass. State College Building Authority (MSCBA) was created for the colleges to borrow from for building projects.

The report focused primarily on the four-year institutions, with the residence halls and other services, where the debit is most concentrated. The total debit for the UMass system is over \$3 billion and for the state universities it is \$1.2 billion. The annual debt service for each campus in 2020 was detailed; UMass Amherst led the UMBA sector with \$95 million and Bridgewater led the MSCBA sector with \$18 million. All of this paid for out of student fees.

Community colleges were impacted as well but in a slightly different way. They have had to borrow from the Health Education Finance Administration (HEFA) to build academic buildings although MSCBA did provide financing for two community college projects since 2014.

Although these colleges have less debt compared to the universities, they also have limited additional revenue sources.

The report cited a MSCBA study saying that community college buildings are older and were of lower quality con-



struction. The colleges are dependent on state funding for maintenance and modernization. After years of lean budgets, the report said the community colleges have a \$1 billion backlog of deferred maintenance.

### Debt Impact

Students are impacted the most by campus debt because they end up paying for it. According to the report, students at Massachusetts state colleges and UMass pay over \$2500 in fees annually just to

go towards the campus debt. And campus revenue raising to address its debt causes an increase of 25 percent in student debt. Increasing costs force students to work additional hours and squeeze out lower income.

Another aspect the debt impacts is the hiring of full-time faculty. The report calculated that if the campuses did not have the building debt, they could hire more full-time faculty at their average salary and benefit levels. As examples, UMass Amherst would be able to hire 516 full-time faculty and Salem State 132 if not for the debt. While not calculated for community colleges, we are certainly aware of the high numbers of part-time faculty in our system that is financially driven.

In discussing the report with the MCCC board, Vice President Joe Nardoni, who also serves on the MTA Board of Directors, said the research is being used by MTA in developing its funding campaign for higher ed. next year. Passage of the Fair Share Amendment would provide a huge boost in funds available

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## Day Grievance Report Stresses Importance of Filing Dates

The union collective bargaining process has two equal groups: negotiators who work to secure favorable work rules, salaries and benefits, and the enforcers who work to maintain the benefits secured in negotiations through the grievance process.

While negotiations take place in public to a major degree, grievances are for the most part filed locally at the 15 individual campuses. Contract violations may be found at one campus, and upon further investigation the same issues may crop up at others. To make chapter directors aware of the trends, the two MCCC Grievance Coordinators

give presentations to the board every semester.

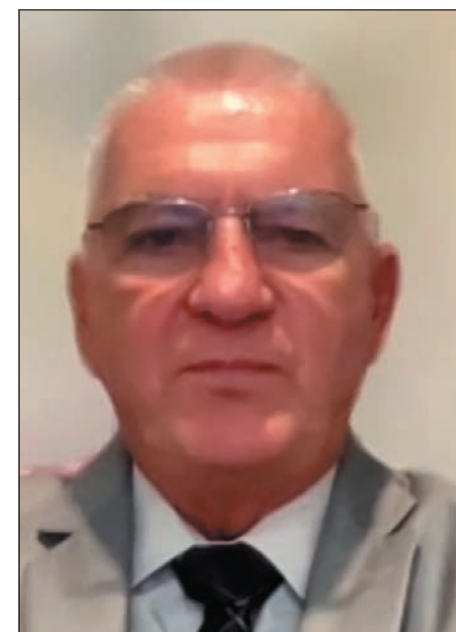
At the September Board of Directors meeting, Day Unit Grievance Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald reviewed 16 MOAs resolving various grievances including, discipline, dismissals, suspensions, non-reappointments, workload, distance education shells, evaluations, and course preferences. All of the grievances were resolved to the satisfaction of the grievants.

In addition, Fitzgerald reviewed a recent arbitration decision that dealt with insubordination for not following a supervisor’s directive. Fitzgerald reminded the Board that if a unit member

believes a supervisor’s instructions are improper or in violation of academic freedom, you must comply and then file a grievance. Failure to follow an administrator’s directive could be considered insubordination and could lead to discipline.

At present, Fitzgerald stated there are a total of 68 day unit grievances pending. Twenty-two pending in mediation and 14 pending in arbitration.

At the end of his presentation, he urged everyone to pay careful attention to the timelines for filing grievances because missing a filing date can threaten a satisfactory result. ■



*MCCC Day Grievance Coordinator Dennis Fitzgerald gave his Fall report on current trends to the Board of Directors.*

# Higher Ed. at Crossroads



Don Williams,  
MCCC Communications  
Coordinator

Over a decade ago, the then chair of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, Charles Desmond said, “the high point of support for public higher ed. was 1979.” When President Ronald Reagan regarded achieving a college education as a personal good that primarily benefitted the individual, then the burden of paying for it should fall on the individual beneficiary.

So states cut their support, tuition increased, and students were forced into debt to pay for their educations.

From 1980 on the long slide in public financing for college continued inexorably. By 2017 a national milestone was reached where public colleges received the majority of their funding from tuition not state appropriations. This has been true in Massachusetts for well over 20 years.

With college funding increasingly reliant on tuition, and especially fees in Mass., enrollment has become an increasingly significant concern. And the trends are very disturbing. Community colleges have been especially hit with a 13.5 percent drop nationally for just 2020 according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC). Public 4-year

colleges saw the smallest decline at 3.0 percent.

First, the country has seen a decline in the traditional college-age population for a decade because of birth rates. While there has been some increase in minority birth rates, the overall picture may begin improving in 2025. But a more disturbing trend is that fewer high school graduates are opting to go to college.

According to the NSCRC the percentage of high school graduates who immediately enrolled in college decreased from 60.5 percent in 2019 to 56.5 percent in 2020; a seven times increase over the 0.6 percent drop in the previous 2018-2019 numbers. The most serious declines in attendance are among low-income students and colleges that predominantly serve lower income students.

Certainly the 2020 numbers were affected by the COVID crisis and all the changing protocols, but that may have just hastened trends already in progress. Studies cite the increasing cost of attending college as one factor, and the burden of student loans, especially on students who don’t complete their degrees. With many college graduates working at places like Starbucks, the arguments from people like venture capitalist Peter Theil that college isn’t worth the expense may also be taking hold.

All of this falls hard on our Massachusetts community colleges that have seen a year over year 6, 7, and 8 percent declines in enrollments. Only one college in our system saw an increase. The colleges are scrambling to find a new source of students and their focus has turned to current high school students attending through various “early college” situations. Many of them on the college campuses. Beyond initial enrollment, these students

don’t necessarily stay for degrees, but transfer to four-year institutions. Their presence on campus profoundly alters the campus vibe.

In an Inside Higher Ed. article, a commentator said, “[T]he wave of high school graduates choosing work over college could lead to a big push in 15 or 20 years for more adult education, drawing an influx of people who have some technical training and can fill lower-salaried positions but aren’t ready for higher level jobs.”

Traditionally community college students’ average age was 26 years old. A proposal from Maura Healey’s campaign covered elsewhere in this issue provides one solution to the crisis. Essentially it’s free community college for adults with no college. If that plan comes to pass in a new administration, maybe the trend can be reversed. ■

## Campus Debt Reveals

*Continued from front page*

for education, and he encouraged everyone to do what they can to support it.

“[D]eferred maintenance and fringe benefits, are increasingly shifted to individual universities. Thus when universities become responsible for additional costs, level funding means less spending on core educational needs.”

Other Members of the group besides Gonsalves were Rich Levy, Retired Professor Salem State University; Gayathri Raja, student UMass Lowell; and Tyler Risteen, student, Framingham State University. ■



*About 120 MCCC members signed up to be silent observers to the Oct. 31 Day bargaining session with as many as 70 participating at any one time.*

# Day Bargaining Observed



Mike Murray, spokesperson for the management bargaining team, at the Oct. 31 session insisted on changes to the Distance Education Agreement in order to get raises for Day Unit members.

Day contract negotiations continued on October 31 with members again invited to be silent observers. About 120 signed up to participate in the noon to 4:00 P.M. Zoom meeting, and at any given time there were over 60 union observers watching.

Management's spokesperson, Mike Murray, insisted from the outset that his team's primary objective was changes in the Distance Education Agreement (DEA), an agreement that affects both the Day and DCE contracts. Salary increases that he called "generous" would be held up unless the union agreed to their demands.

He said that if the union accepted the changes, he would be asking for the same at the next round of DCE bargaining. But this would violate the rights of the DCE unit by tying their hands over this issue, reflecting an ongoing general disrespect

for the collective bargaining process. While Murray works for the Department of Higher Ed., he is representing the 15 community college presidents.

The proposed changes would affect the definitions of the types of distance learning modalities, and severely reduce the faculty compensation for developing a new distance course. Murray argued that the language of the DEA had not changed since it was first negotiated in 1998. The union countered that the stipends for developing courses had also not gone up over that time.

The observers weren't silent when the negotiating teams were in caucus, and they voiced increasing frustration with the delaying tactics they had just seen from the management side. They questioned why this stumbling block at this time when the contract has been expired for a year and a half, and may expire in

June if a two-year deal is accepted. The DCE Contract also expires next year as well, giving the opportunity of joint negotiations to address the concerns of both MCCC units.

Members of the Contract Action Team (CAT) were in attendance and took note of the anger. There was a general sentiment that it is time to ramp up activities. A number of suggestions were made about possible future actions—some drastic. Robert Whitman from Bunker Hill chairs the CAT and he urged more people to join the group. Members can contact their chapter CAT coordinator or chapter president. They can also contact Whitman directly at [rwhitman1958@gmail.com](mailto:rwhitman1958@gmail.com).

The MCCC Bargaining Team will be giving a more detailed explanation in an upcoming bargaining update. Another bargaining session is scheduled for Nov. 14. ■

## Healey Campaign Plan for Community Colleges

On Oct. 17 the Maura Healey and Kim Driscoll gubernatorial campaign rolled out a significant proposal regarding community colleges. As reported in the *State House News*, the policy would focus on helping older state residents who have a high school diploma or equivalent but have not completed college.

Called MassReconnect, the plan would fund community college degrees or certificates for state residents who are 25 or older and have not earned a degree. The plan would not just cover tuition, but would also fill in any gaps for fees, textbooks, application fees and other expenses after federal financial aid and grants. Students attending part-time would also be covered by the plan.

Nate MacKinnon, executive director for the Massachusetts Association of Community College (MACC), the entity that represents the 15 community college presidents, was quoted supporting the plan saying, "One of our challenges in the community college space is that most people think college is unaffordable, or not for them, or both."

Over the past 30 years tuition and, especially, fees at Massachusetts community colleges have steadily increased, and with the high cost of living especially housing and childcare, older students can find attending college extremely difficult. Because of their lack of credentials, the target audience are more likely stuck in lower paying positions.

MacKinnon added that, "One thing

about focusing on the adult population is that these are students who tend to be really successful because they've already been in the workforce, and are now ready to come back and study." Traditionally our average community college student age has been 26 years old. He also said, "Having the narrative available that they can go to college for free is going to be huge in terms of convincing folks to take the next step and not worry about taking on additional fiscal debt."

A Healey campaign spokesperson did not have an estimate of the program cost. It would depend on the number of people who apply and what level of financial support they need. But they said that 1.8

million Massachusetts residents over 25 with a high school diploma or equivalent but no college would be eligible, and that represents 38 percent of the age group.

The plan is being promoted as addressing workforce development and the state's vital need for workers with higher-level skills. Lt. Governor candidate Kim Driscoll said, "the MassReconnect program would allow older students to gain access to the industries that need workers the most through our excellent community college system."

Healey herself said, "Our growing industries need more trained workers, and our residents need access to affordable education opportunities... to get ahead in

good-paying fields like health care and clean energy." Given the likelihood of Healey winning the governorship, this plan has greater chance of implementation than many other campaign proposals.

In a way, the plan is a limited version and perhaps a halfway step to "Free Community College."



### Write Us

#### Letters to the Editor

Only submissions by MCCC unit members will be accepted. Letters should be no more than 200 words in length. The author must include name and chapter affiliation, which will be published with the letter. Authors must provide the editor with contact information in the form of either email address, mailing address or telephone number. Letters will be published on a space available basis and may be edited for length and appropriateness. Not all submissions can be published.

#### Guest Columns

Guest Columns should be no more than 400 words in length. Columns by authors who are not MCCC members may be accepted. The author's name and affiliation will be published with the column.

#### Mail to:

Donald Williams  
North Shore Community College  
1 Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923

#### Or email:

[Communications@mccc-union.org](mailto:Communications@mccc-union.org)

## Visit The MCCC Online! [www.mccc-union.org](http://www.mccc-union.org)

The MCCC website is the best and most up-to-date source for late breaking developments important to Day and DCE Unit members in addition to being a valuable resource for MCCC contact information, bargaining and legislative updates, contracts, committee assignments, bylaws, local chapter leadership, calendar of meetings and events, and the MCCC News newsletters (current and past).

Find links to NEA, MTA and MCCC on Twitter and Facebook.

Bookmark the site for frequent referral.

There is a "Members Only" area with additional information. You log on to that with the same credentials as your MTA Members account. Don't have an account? Create one using your membership card info at [MassTeacher.org](http://MassTeacher.org).

# Know Your Day Contract

## November 2022

- Nov. 11** Veterans Day holiday (p. 25)  
**Nov. 21** Unit Personnel Practices Committee established (p. 46).  
**Nov. 24-25** Thanksgiving Holiday (p. 25)  
**Nov. 25** Professional Staff must use one of the three off campus days (p. 56)

## December 2022

- Dec. 1** Applications due for Sabbatical Leave beginning July 1 for professional staff or Fall semester for faculty (p. 25).  
**Dec. 24** Last day fall semester can end (p. 53).  
**Dec. 24** **Last Day of classes** Faculty submit college service and student advisement form (p. 60).  
**Dec. 25** Christmas (p. 25)  
**Dec. 30** Professional staff submit documentation of performance of duties and responsibilities including, but not limited to a log student advisement, if appropriate, and college service activities (p. 61)

**NOTE:** Cited page numbers in parentheses are from the 2018–2021. Dates may vary depending on the first day of classes. Most of these dates are “last date” standards. In many instances the action can be accomplished before the date indicated.

# MCCC OFFICE MANAGER WANTED

## Job Description

This person supervises the MCCC office personnel who are responsible for processing accounts payable, dues collection, financial and membership reports to the Board of Directors and as needed, supervising audits, supervising payroll, and interacting and assisting MCCC members with their inquiries.

## Commitment

This is a 12-month part-time position, estimated at 20 hours per week. A presence in the Worcester office is required at least 14 hours per week. Guidance and instruction will be available from previous treasurers and office managers.

## Compensation

Compensation will be a combination of salary and reassigned time. The total compensation (including salary and reassigned time) will be between \$30,000 and \$35,000.

Travel over 60 miles per day is reimbursed. Parking is reimbursed. Limited home office support.

## To Apply

Deadline to apply: November 17, 2022

Contact President Claudine Barnes for the complete posting and job description at [mcccpresbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:mcccpresbarnes@gmail.com)



## MCCC News

<http://mccc-union.org>

Editor:

Donald R. Williams, Jr.

President:

Claudine Barnes

Vice President:

Joe Nardoni

Secretary:

Colleen Avedikian

The MCCC News is a publication of the Massachusetts Community College Council. The Newsletter is intended to be an information source for the members of the MCCC and for other interested parties. Members' letters up to 200 words and guest columns up to 400 words will be accepted and published on a space-available basis. The material in this publication may be reprinted with the acknowledgment of its source. For further information on issues discussed in this publication, contact Donald Williams, North Shore Community College, One Ferncroft Road, Danvers, MA 01923. email: [Communications@mccc-union.org](mailto:Communications@mccc-union.org)

## Adjunct/Contingent Name Usage Considered

Debate has gone on for several years as to what label to use for those faculty members who work exclusively under the MCCC's DCE contract. Part-time, adjunct and contingent are the most common terms in use, and each reflects a different aspect of those faculty members' employment. Part-time reflects the amount of work they perform. Adjunct reflects the role they serve to the colleges. And contingent reflects the conditions of their employment.

While “adjunct” is in common usage among the public and the press, many faculty feel that the term is offensive as it is defined as “dependent” or “subordinate.” It implies that these faculty are not as good as non-adjunct faculty. From the faculty standpoint, what sets them apart from the full-time, tenured faculty is the fact that their positions are contingent, with little guarantee of future employment beyond their current semester.

To address this, the MCCC Board of Directors, at its October meeting voted to create an *Ad Hoc* committee to study

what terminology the union should use in its documents. In supporting the motion Candace Shivers from Mt Wachusett, who also serves as an NEA director, said, “Words do matter.” Executive committee member Swan Gates from Cape Cod and at-large director Mark Linde were appointed to co-chair the committee that has been charged to make recommendations at the January board meeting.

The committee will be looking at members' preference and also the ramifications any recommendation would have on the various places in MCCC policies, documents etc. that might be affected. ■



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## Free Life Insurance for Union Members

Members of the MCCC are also members of the National Education Association, and as an NEA member you are automatically covered by the NEA Complimentary Life Insurance (formerly known as NEA DUES-TAB) term life insurance. It is a guaranteed benefit for Active and Life members. All you need to do is register your beneficiary.

The free program offers \$1,000 of term life insurance, up to \$5,000 (depending on years of membership) of accidental death and dismemberment coverage, and up to \$50,000 of AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or serving as an association leader.

To register your beneficiary or to obtain more information call 1-800-637-4636, or go to <http://www.neamb.com/insurance/nea-complimentary-life-insurance.htm> ■

## MOVING?

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