

Dear PSU members:

**In the face of this unprecedented health emergency, we want to ensure that all employees are safe. If you feel that you are being asked to work in a way that endangers your safety or health, immediately notify your supervisor and the union (prostaff.union@umb.edu) to discuss steps that may be taken to address your concerns. If you choose not to work because of lack of response by the University to valid health and safety issues, indicate that in writing to your supervisor and the union (prostaff.union@umb.edu). *The PSU supports your right to a safe and healthy work environment!***

We are disheartened that we need to take this step; however, we believe the statement and FAQ issued by Interim Chancellor Newman's administration Friday evening constitute a colossal failure to respond responsibly to this emergency, making it clear to us that health and safety are not being prioritized. If you agree with us, please read, sign and share this petition (<https://tinyurl.com/UMBkeepus-safe>) that calls on UMB to adopt better policies to protect their employees, students and the public.

As you may know, PSU, CSU and GEO leaders requested to bargain over the emergency policies that should be implemented to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic. On Thursday, we met with representatives from HR and presented a full set of policies (attached) that we believe would protect employee health and safety, greatly reduce the risk of the virus spreading, and allow UMB to continue to function during this crisis. Instead of engaging us further in finalizing such policies, the administration notified us that they were issuing their own guidance on Friday evening.

It was frustrating to see much of what we had proposed ignored, and, frankly, angering to read the administration's continued emphasis on making sure that everybody is working rather than prioritizing the health and safety of their employees and the public. Indeed, a communication from Provost McDermott on Friday instructed administrators to "*err by designating more rather than fewer people as 'required onsite,'*" directly contradicting the public health directive to minimize the number of employees required to come to work. In addition, this administration's repeated insistence that they need not bargain with their employee unions, and that it is their "managerial right" to impose any policies in an emergency, are further examples of the disregard for staff which have typified Interim Chancellor Newman's tenure.

Here's what we proposed to the UMB administration:

- First, and of utmost importance, that any employee in a high risk category, or with a family member or housemate in a high risk category, be allowed to stay home, without loss of pay or benefits and without using their earned time, until the risk of exposure to COVID-19 has passed. If possible, such employees could work while home. If working from home wasn't possible, the employee's and their family's health and safety should be prioritized.
- Second, that any employee exposed to somebody with a known case of COVID-19, or with a family member similarly exposed, should be required to stay home, without loss of pay or benefits and without using their earned sick time. This is important so

that we can try to stop the spread of the virus throughout our entire community.

- Third, in order to minimize the number of employees required to come to campus—as called for by public health agencies and by the Governor—that all work that can be done remotely should be done remotely: equipment, software, internet access should be provided to any and all employees whose work must continue during this period but does not require their physical presence on campus. Since the campus is moving courses on-line, cancelling events, and requesting that students stay off-campus, some employees' work tasks will be minimal to non-existent. Those employees should stay home and still get paid.
- Fourth, we recognized that to keep our systems running and to provide the care on which our students depend, some employees will be required to be physically present on our campus. These individuals must be provided with personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies so that they can actively minimize their risk of exposure to the virus. In addition, parking should be made free for them so they can get to work without using public transportation.
- Finally, as daycares and elementary and secondary schools shut down, parents of children in those systems should be allowed to stay home to care for their families, without loss of pay or benefits and without using their earned time.

These were our priorities. We think these were reasonable proposals that could have been fully adopted by Interim Chancellor Newman's administration. Sadly, they weren't.

We are in a health emergency the likes of which none of us has experienced. All public health officials are emphasizing that the only way to interrupt the rapid spread of COVID-19 and to keep the most vulnerable members of our communities safe is for people to stay home and reduce their contact with others to the absolute minimum. **The UMB administration should immediately remove all barriers to accomplishing this goal, including the requirement that employees use their own earned time.** We will continue to insist that the UMB administration do the right thing.

In the meantime and in light of the FAQ that was released on Friday, we ask our members to take the following steps:

**1. Prioritize your and your family's health and safety!**

- If you or a family member is in a high-risk category (i.e. adults 60 years old or older, and people with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease), immediately inform HR (Marie.Bowen@umb.edu) and the PSU (prostaff.union@umb.edu). We want to ensure that you are allowed to remain at home.
- If your child's school is closed and you must provide care for them, immediately inform HR (Marie.Bowen@umb.edu) and the PSU (prostaff.union@umb.edu), so we can ensure that you are allowed to remain at home.
- If you are asked to do anything that you believe endangers your health or safety, immediately notify your supervisor and the PSU (prostaff.union@umb.edu) in writing.

**2. If you are told that you must report to the campus, please let the PSU (prostaff.union@umb.edu) know.** We have not yet received a full list of

employees being required to report to the campus to work. We want to discuss with you what you are being asked to do, determine if you agree that the work necessitates you being on campus, and, if so, ensure that you are provided with everything you need to be safe.

3. **If you are being asked to work from home and have any concerns about what you are being asked to do, contact the PSU.**
4. Finally—and this is very important—**if you are exposed to somebody who develops a case of COVID-19, or if you develop COVID-19 symptoms, please inform both UHS (Robert.Pomales@umb.edu) and your town's public health department.** This is essential so that steps can be taken to protect other people you have come into close contact with.

There is a possibility that in the near future UMass will realize that it must simply shut down in the face of this epidemic. If that happens, or if any other changes take place, we will be in touch via your work email. Please check it regularly.

Please keep in touch with us. We are here to support one another and keep each other as safe as possible.

In solidarity,  
Anneta, Sarah, Mary Jo and the whole PSU team

PS. You can email us at [prostaff.union@umb.edu](mailto:prostaff.union@umb.edu)--Anneta, Sarah and Mary Jo will be monitoring it daily. If for reasons of confidentiality, you prefer to reach out to any of us individually, please do so at [Anneta.Argyres@umb.edu](mailto:Anneta.Argyres@umb.edu), [Sarah.Bartlett@umb.edu](mailto:Sarah.Bartlett@umb.edu), or [MaryJoConnellyPSU@gmail.com](mailto:MaryJoConnellyPSU@gmail.com)

## ANNETA'S NOTES: re Newman's message & FAQ

### Newman's message:

- seems to say that if you can't work remotely (as in you don't have the equipment or your tasks can't be done remotely?), talk to your manager. What will they do?
- "follow directives from your manager" Oy!

### Required on site/Essential

- deemed by your manager
- must report to campus as normal
- maintain 6-foot distance
- NO MENTION OF PPE OR CLEANING SUPPLIES

### Working remotely:

- work your normal schedule
- perform job duties as assigned
- follow normal time away/leave policies
- managers should be flexible re work from home arrangements
- if worker doesn't have internet access, can be re-designated as required on site (ugh!)

### At risk employees/family members at risk:

- contact manager to discuss possibility of temporary work from home arrangement
- if work from home is not possible, use accrued time
- if not enough accrued time, call heather

### School closures: - take paid leave/accrued time

### Have symptoms/test positive:

- use sick time
- contact heather for more time
- report to UHS

### If required to self-quarantine:

- alert UHS
- use earned time; if not enough, call Heather and your manager

**WE WILL SUPPORT YOU IN EXERCISING YOUR RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK!**

**We will fight to keep you safe, and help you advocate to your rights.**

**Please take these steps:**

...

**include some sort of check-list for people to give as reasons to not be working and staying home**

**group petition that calls on UMB to allow people to stay safe and NOT use earned time; provide PPE for all on campus**

**\*what triggers us to call for UMB to close: # cases at UMB/Boston, MBTA shuts down, public offices shut down.**