

July 21, 2017

Dear Members of the Board,

In the fall we sent a letter to the administration of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, expressing concerns about major cutbacks to the institution's labor center and program. I am pleased to report that this story had (at least for now) a happy ending. I contacted colleagues there for an update and here are excerpts from the responses I received.

"Thanks so much for getting in touch. The letter that you wrote in September was fabulous, and it had a big impact on the university, along with a lot of support that we received from colleagues, alumni, and labor activists all over the US and even abroad. The university was shocked at the massive outpouring of support for the Labor Center, and it completely changed the tone on campus. The administration immediately made public statements of support for the Labor Center, denied ever suggesting there were cuts to be made, and promised ongoing funding and no further cuts."

"In the winter, we signed an agreement with the administration that basically restored all of the cuts that had been made -- they provided funding for up to ten new graduate students in Labor Studies each year, restored staff support, and allowed us to create student internship positions that are covered under the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO/UAW)."

"So our programs are continuing and going strong."

"Short answer: Pretty much a total victory for our side. The chancellor used his own money to support 6 students a year for the next three years, and he set up an arrangement where if the labor movement will hire people as interns the university will pay their tuition and fees (for up to another dozen students). We have 15 students coming this fall, all with full support."

I wanted to share this good news with you.

Best wishes,
Héctor