

Candidate Statement
Social Sciences Representative
Spring 2025
Dr. Aaron Smith-Walter

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Aaron Smith-Walter, and I am writing to ask for your vote as Social Sciences representative to the MSP. I have been a proud member of the MSP since first coming to UML in the Fall of 2016. I am a tenured Associate Professor of Political Science, Director of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program, and chair of the FAHSS Graduate Curriculum Committee. I am also a member of the MSP Solidarity Coalition slate (MSPSolidarity.org), and my candidacy is animated by that shared vision of **solidarity, empowerment, and transparency**.

I am running for this position because higher education in Massachusetts, and across the nation, is facing challenging times. I am convinced that successfully navigating the road ahead will require that we take steps to strengthen our union's capacity to communicate, coordinate, and cooperate to achieve real gains in compensation and working conditions. However, making sure we are fairly compensated for our efforts, and that we possess the tools we need to excel in our jobs at an R1 institution, is only part of why I believe that we must take action now to strengthen our union.

We are at a time when we must raise our voices and stand up for higher education and the essential role it plays in our society. Developing the next generation of researchers, teachers, and citizens capable of critical thought is higher education's vital contribution to the maintenance of the Republic. Contributing to society's collective base of knowledge, and to the repertoire of scientifically informed practice in our institutions, is the best inheritance we can bequeath to future generations. As vital as both these missions are, declining funding from federal and state governments and the arrival of the long-feared demographic cliff have combined to make 'business as usual' untenable. The arrival of artificial intelligence (AI), market pressures to develop and deliver more classes and programs online, and an increasingly restrictive environment around our ability to recruit international students to the United States to pursue advanced education contribute to the hurdles we face.

It is my view that to defend higher education and deliver material improvements for MSP members, we must rethink our union's approach to its work. If elected, I pledge to work diligently with the other candidates on the Solidarity Coalition slate to develop a better and more detailed understanding of the needs of our members through a series of interviews, focus groups and surveys to gain a detailed inventory of needs among the faculty. I plan to improve and implement new mechanisms of communication and accountability to increase MSP responsiveness to the needs of member throughout the social science departments at the university.

In closing, I would appreciate your vote for Social Sciences representative to the MSP and welcome your support for all the members of the MSP Solidarity Coalition slate. Thank you.

In Solidarity,
Aaron Smith-Walter