

Fighting the Privatization of Public Universities

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| Digital Copy of Handout | Organizing Guidebook |
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The objectives of the Massachusetts Higher Ed Anti-Privatization Project (funded by Mass Teachers Association)

Privatization has many forms: public-private partnerships, privatization of departments, outsourcing of campus services, online program managers, management consultants and construction and maintenance.

- ❖ Look at private corporations operating on your campuses and those projects that are in the pipeline, i.e., campus buildings (e.g., dorms) managed by public building authorities.
- ❖ From the list you generate, select one or two of the most egregious examples of privatization for case study and learn more about it. Reach out to impacted campus groups to document the harm that this private takeover has caused to students, employees, campus missions and the community.
- ❖ Raise campus awareness about privatization and its negative effects, and organize some resistance through whatever forms are appropriate at the campus and/or statewide level.

1. Investigating privatization on your campus See Guidebook for Exposing Privatization.

- ❖ Begin with a search on your college's website for the college's contractors, leases and public-private partnerships. Use search terms like "bids", "RFP", "vendor", "contracts", and "auxiliary services". With some luck you may find a web page or a document that lists larger contracts. If that doesn't work, look online for your campus's most recent Financial Statement, Audit or Budget document (or request the documents from the President's or CFO's office). Use "control F" to search within the document(s) with the terms above. Alternatively, some campuses provide employees access to detailed financial reports within systems like Banner or Peoplesoft.
- ❖ Should the financial documents not have information about vendors, send a request to your campus' Public Records Officer for the name of vendors providing services over 50K (or 500K for large universities) noting the service provided and annual cost.
- ❖ To understand your college's reliance on contracted employees, you could file a Public Records request for a list of all employees of the college broken down by their bargaining unit, non-unit professionals/management and those who are contingent/contract employees). Example language for records requests can be found in the guidebook.
- ❖ To learn about future outsourcing, look to see if your college has RFPs for services or projects posted on its website or search on Muckrock. Alternatively there may be a state website for active RFPs for each public agency.

2. How can I provide a snapshot of privatization on my campus?

First collect the information on your campus/system in a systematic way so you can analyze it.
[Sample worksheet for collecting campus and statewide data.](#)

Depending on the documents you obtain above, you may be able to create a couple of graphs that capture the scale of privatization from these and other sources. Here are some examples:

| Outsourcing Categories | 2003 | % of expenses | 2022 | % of expenses2 |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Contract Employees | \$ 311,703 | 2.0% | \$ 3,000,000 | 1.8% |
| Contracted Services | \$ 261,403 | 1.7% | \$ 10,100,000 | 6.1% |
| IT & Telecom Services | | | \$ 5,700,000 | 3.5% |
| MSCBA | \$ 642,404 | 4.1% | \$ 19,629,000 | 11.9% |
| Leased Spaces | \$ 28,282 | 0.2% | \$ 1,100,000 | 0.7% |
| Total | \$ 1,243,792 | 7.9% | \$ 39,529,000 | 24.0% |

Figure 1: Percentage of Salem State Budget for Outsourcing Services & Labor 2003 vs 2023 (Data pulled from SSU's PeopleSoft database).

| Mass College of Liberal Arts | VENDOR | VENDOR Service Provided | Invoice Total | Corporate Revenue | Number of employees | Revenue per employee ratio |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| FY23 | ARAMARK | Food Service Provider | 2,444,992 | \$14,600,000,000 | 273,875 | \$53,309 |
| FY23 | LIAISON / SPECTRUM EDU SOLUT | Admissions Marketing | 252,486 | \$75,000,000 | 500 | \$150,000 |
| FY23 | ELLUCIAN COMPANY L.P. | Banner Support | 193,580 | \$820,000,000 | 1,660 | \$493,976 |
| FY23 | EAB GLOBAL INC | Student Platform Software | 160,000 | \$213,700,000 | 1,300 | \$164,385 |
| FY23 | SIMPSON SCARBOROUGH LLC | Marketing Consultant | 160,000 | \$10,200,000 | 89 | \$114,607 |
| FY23 | RUBIN & RUDMAN LLP | Legal Services | 149,708 | \$26,000,000 | 234 | \$111,111 |
| FY23 | SOFTWARE HOUSE INTL | various software agreements | 135,696 | \$11,000,000,000 | 5,000 | \$2,200,000 |
| FY23 | BLUE SPRUCE TECHNOLOGIES, IN | Cyber Security | 98,500 | \$6,000,000 | 20 | \$300,000 |

Figure 2: Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Vendors & Corporate Revenues ([Zippia.com](https://zippia.com))

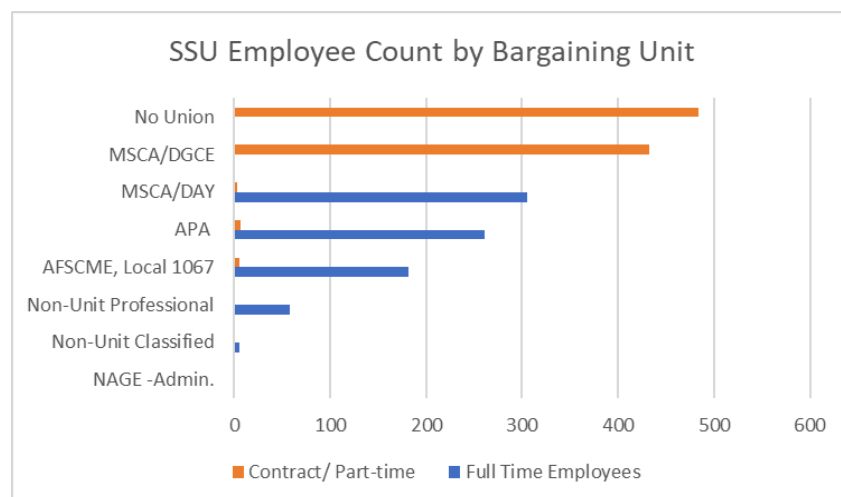


Figure 3: Union vs Non-union Workers at Salem State (2023), <https://cthrupayroll.mass.gov>

3. How can we determine the effects of these existing and proposed privatizations?

- ❖ Pick out the one or two of the largest or most egregious privatization schemes. Look on your campus website or a general web search for a description of the privatization project or vendor and claims about what will be accomplished. Examples:

Bunker Hill Community College Redevelopment: “The Vision Project seeks to bring BHCC into the 21st century and beyond, leveraging the development of BHCC’s 32-acre Charlestown Campus through a public-private partnership to create new, state-of-the-art college facilities within a new mixed-use district. BHCC has a unique opportunity to bring the world to its campus, and to foster partnerships between public higher education and the local knowledge economy while creating the skilled and diverse workforce of tomorrow.”

Academic Partnerships: “Our mission is simple: helping universities grow and students succeed by increasing access to high-quality, affordable and workforce-relevant education delivered online. We are in the business of changing lives through education.”

Follett Bookstores: “We partner with you to understand what makes your campus unique so we can deliver compelling solutions aligned to your mission and goals, from seamless course material access to game-changing retail experiences.”

Aramark Dining Services: “It takes eye-opening campus experiences and first-class higher education dining services to stay competitive and yield the best students”

- ❖ Begin to examine the negative consequences with campus community members.

Costs to the community: Loss of access to public services and employment opportunities

Costs to students: additional student fees, lower quality services, forced choice

Educational quality: loss of academic freedom & shared governance, work overload

Costs to Employees: union-busting, a contingent, unbenefited labor force, lower wages

- ❖ Discuss how project /service goals could be better delivered “in-house”. Look for successful examples of strengthening campus services or insourcing services (what’s possible).

Bunker Hill Community College Redevelopment: Campus stakeholders create the redevelopment plan to meet community needs and advance the educational mission. The Commonwealth takes out a capital bond to pay for it (which is paid through state taxes not student fees).

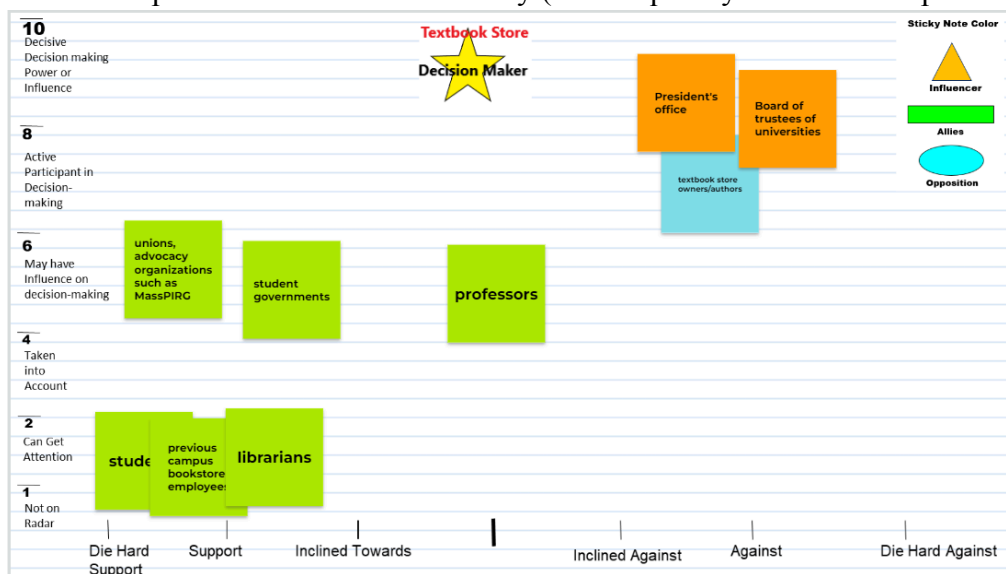
Academic Partnerships: Don't renew contract: Hire additional recruitment and retention services staff and boost student aid to meet enrollment goals.

Follett Bookstores: Don't renew contract or make it less predatory; have students and educators involved in decision-making about operations: run an in-house bookstore that offers course materials at-cost.

In-sourcing Dining: Don't renew contract; run in-house. An initiative at UMass Amherst & Westfield State uses more locally-sourced, less-processed food and charges students a few dollars less per meal than their previous private vendor. Other campuses in the nation are breaking with corporate dining facilities.

4. Organizing Strategies

- ❖ **Collectively do a power analysis** of your campus or system: What needs to change and who are the decision makers, influencers, allies and opposition. This is critical since most decisions on privatization are made locally (and frequently in a non-transparent manner).



❖ Organizing at the campus or local level

- Raise awareness: tabling, class projects, published essays, social media, demonstrations)
- Ally with students who often suffer from predatory and/or low quality private contracts in bookstores, dining, health and counseling services etc.
- Have discussions with unions and student groups to get buy-in. Summarize the problem and possible solutions (ex. brief about Follett Bookstores). See Guidebook (Section 5) for tips on how to convene and structure these meetings.
- Prepare questions that community members can ask decision makers: Bookstore example

- Before the Board decides to renew its bookstore contract, would you be willing to send out a survey to students to gather their experiences first?
- Follett (or other provider) is a private company with profit goals, so we worry that students may not be getting the best prices and that there is a disincentive to sell (cheaper) used books. Have you considered in-sourcing the bookstore or using a non-profit provider?
- Is there a way to help students with financial aid get a cash advance for course materials so that they can price shop for the lowest items?
- Speak up at Trustee, Regents, or Administration meetings to put pressure on local decision makers to re-think particularly wasteful, overextended or unnecessary campus contracts
- Send petitions & letters to trustees and upper-level administrators. See Guidebook (Sec. 5)
- Push for/elect union officers willing to engage in organizing for against privatization

❖ **Organize at the System or Statewide level**

- Work across unions to share anti-privatization contract language
- Pressure State Auditor or other officials to investigate predatory practices
Sample prepwork for Massachusetts State Auditor meeting about privatization oversight
- Push for new/strengthened anti-privatization laws
- Work across unions and community groups to push for new funding for public higher ed, i.e, the Massachusetts Teachers Association with its partners in the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, placed the Fair Share Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution on the ballot . The Amendment, which was passed in 2022, created a 4% tax on personal individual incomes over \$1,000,000 with the funds, some \$2 billion per year in each of the first two years, is specifically dedicated to public education and transportation.