

MCC president urges Romney to fund faculty

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BOSTON — Community college presidents are calling on the Romney administration to sign off on a faculty contract that has gone unfunded for more than two

years, saying failure to do so affects campus morale and the ability to attract and retain faculty and staff.

In a letter to Gov. Mitt Romney last week, Middlesex Community College president Carole Cowan said the delay in funding

the agreement affects not only the 2,000 members of the faculty unions at the 15 community colleges, but the businesses that rely on them for a "competent, educated workforce."

"The contract for the faculty who prepare (students)

for the workforce was negotiated in good faith. It's time for it to be funded," Cowan wrote.

"They have been waiting since 2002, still teaching an extra 25 percent workload."

In 2002, the union representing faculty agreed to a one-year contract extension

with the Board of Higher Education that included funding for "points" that compensate full-time faculty based on length of service.

The new salary structure formalized a faculty agreement to teach five courses instead of four.

contract

While the extension was ratified by the union and the board, then-Acting Gov. Jane Swift did not sign it and sent it to the Legislature, which is required to fund it.

Since Gov. Mitt Romney took office in January 2003, faculty unions have been pressuring him to sign off on the agreement. So far he hasn't done so, arguing it would be unfair to fund retroactive increases negotiated at a time the state was in a fiscal crisis.

Faculty union members who have been working without a contract are now adhering to a "work-to-rule" job action, in which they perform the minimum level of work required, but nothing more. They are also negotiating a new three-year deal, with little incentive to accept the heavier courseload without compensation.

"Those (points) are an absolutely integral and necessary part of the deal that we made. If they weren't there, we wouldn't have agreed to the deal in the first place," said Joe Nardoni, an English professor at Middlesex and former president of the faculty union.

On April 19, Judith I. Gilk, chancellor of the Board of Higher Education, resubmitted a request to Romney for an appropriation of \$367,868 to cover the one-year cost of funding those points, prompting another round of letters and phone calls urging the Republican governor to support the agreement.

A spokesman for the Republican governor said the contract is under review.

"This is part of an ongoing conversation, as we discuss our options with the Board of Higher Education," said Romney spokesman Felix Browne.