

October 14, 2004

To: University of Massachusetts Amherst Commission on Campus Diversity

From: John V. Lombardi,
Chancellor
Charlena Seymour,
Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Michael Gargano,
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Campus Life

Re: The Challenge of Diversity at UMass Amherst

The University of Massachusetts Amherst has a long commitment to building a racially and ethnically diverse campus community of faculty, staff, and students that contributes to the classroom and co-curricular education of each student. This commitment has resulted over the years in the development of programs and the engagement of campus leadership in working towards this goal. At the same time as the ethnic composition of the population of Massachusetts, reflecting trends visible elsewhere in the United States, continues to change, and as the patterns of high school graduation and college attendance become clearer, UMass Amherst has on occasion found it necessary to review, modify, and adjust its programs and approach to supporting the minority students on our campus. National data indicate that the number of minority students graduating from all high schools will increase significantly in the next decade while the number of white, non-Hispanic graduates will decline within an increasing population of total high school graduates that will reach a peak of about 3.2 million by the end of the decade.

Although the Massachusetts experience may not follow national trends exactly, we anticipate that the college-bound high school graduates from Massachusetts institutions will reflect this change with increasing numbers of minorities (especially Hispanic-Latinos) as programs to improve Massachusetts high schools continue to succeed. These data give a sense of the challenge facing every college campus because the programs designed in a prior generation to serve a minority population with one set of characteristics and needs may not be as effective in meeting the needs of this generation of college students.

The Amherst Campus Challenge

On the Amherst campus, the history of minority recruitment, retention, and support has had some significant success thanks to strong leadership from many faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. At the same time, many concerns continue to remain

unresolved and new issues have appeared. Today's students from all racial and ethnic groups come to college with different attitudes, expectations, and needs than their counterparts of a decade or more ago, and programs optimal then may not now be as effective.

On our campus, we know that the racial and ethnic conflicts that exist in the communities from which our students come carry over into campus life. We know that education programs designed to establish the standards of behavior we expect from all members of our community must be constantly revised and reinforced since each new generation of students requires clear direction about our expectations within this campus community. We know that some among us believe that encouraging conflict is an effective tactic while others believe that disengagement from these difficult issues is the appropriate response. Neither approach produces the kind of university community we require, and both approaches are indicative of a need to review and reframe our commitment of resources, our organizational structure, and our programs to improve the conditions and reduce behaviors that create occasions for conflict and provide the opportunities that reengage more of our campus community in the work of improving the campus.

A Perspective on Diversity at UMass Amherst

Following national standards, the Amherst campus collects data on students who define themselves within governmentally established categories of race and ethnicity. These categories themselves have less analytical power today than when the government invented them because many students see themselves in more complex ways than can be captured by these groups. In particular, national data indicate that more students simply refuse to self identify within any of these categories because their racial and ethnic heritage is complex. Individuals of color may have Hispanic and Latino or Asian cultural backgrounds, and may find the official categories of Black, Hispanic, or Asian unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, these data are the best we have, and absent changes in the federally required reporting standards, we use them as indicators of our student body composition.

Over the past five years, the total of self-identified ALANA (African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American) students has fallen by about 10 students, and the composition of the ALANA population has changed. The Asian/Pacific Islander category has grown by 97 students while the Black, African-American and Hispanic-Latino categories have declined by 36 and 47 students respectively. The White, non-Hispanic population has grown by 725 students. These numbers indicate that the campus is less successful in recruiting Black, African-American and Hispanic-Latino students than Asian-Pacific Islanders and White, non-Hispanic students. The campus has also lost 19 American Indian-Alaska Native and five Cape Verdean students over these five years from its ALANA population totals.

Admission and Acceptance--If we look at the admission and acceptance data for the past three years, we can see some of the basis for our concerns. The acceptance rate for Black, African-American students (expressed as the percentage of those who applied that

the campus accepted) rose from 42.4% in 2002, to 55.1% in 2003, to 63.8% in 2004. Similarly, for Hispanic-Latino students, the acceptance rate rose from 48.3% in 2002, to 76.1% in 2003, to 78.1% in 2004. Clearly, the campus has worked hard to ensure the admittance to campus of greater percentages of those minorities who apply. However, once admitted, the percentage of these students who enroll has declined over the same three years. For Black, African-American, the percent who enroll (out of the total admitted) declined from 38.7% in 2002, to 36.5% in 2003, to 29.4% in 2004. For Hispanic-Latino students, the acceptance rate remained more stable at 28.9% in 2002, 30.4% in 2003, and 30% in 2004. As a reference, the acceptance rate for White, non-Hispanic students also remained mostly stable with 27.9% in 2002, to 30.9% in 2003, to 29.9% in 2004.

These rates tell us that the campus does a good job of accepting students from the Black, African-American group and from the Hispanic-Latino group but is less successful in persuading accepted students to attend (including White, non-Hispanic students). Percentages do not tell the entire story, however. The absolute number of student admitted is also important here. For Black, African-American students, the number admitted increased from 390 in 2002, to 391 in 2003, to 442 in 2004. For Hispanic-Latino students, the number admitted increased from 350 in 2002, to 408 in 2003, to 513 in 2004. Clearly, these data suggest that our process of admission continues to recruit and admit about the same or a few more students from these groups, but has not done as well at persuading Black, African-American students to enroll as it does Hispanic-Latino or White, non-Hispanic, students.

Many reasons help explain why admitted students fail to accept admission. Some chose not to attend college, some cannot afford to attend a residential full-time institution and choose a community or state college closer to home, and some decide to enroll in institutions with less rigorous academic requirements. Some students seek particular contexts for their education: urban vs. rural, local vs. residential, research institution vs. undergraduate institution. It is difficult to determine exactly why students fail to enroll once admitted, but the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has begun a program to determine what characteristics attract students to this campus as well as cause students to choose another campus.

Academic Preparation--However, we do have data on academic preparation. Many students may choose an institution based on the match between their academic profile and the profile they believe represented by other students admitted in the same cohort. In our case, taking the most recent data available (2003), we can identify some differences in the academic profiles of Black, African-American students, Hispanic-Latino students, and White, non-Hispanic students. Admitted Black, African-American students had average SAT scores in the 978 range, and high school GPA's in the 3.06 range. Hispanic-Latino students had scores in the 1020 range, and high school GPA's in the 3.19 range. White, non-Hispanic students had SAT's in the 1150 range and GPA's in the 3.29 range. Students from Asian/Pacific Islander categories, in contrast, have SAT's in the 1106 and GPA's in the 3.31 range. Many admitted students in all racial or ethnic categories at the lower edge of the distribution represented by these averages might have

chosen to attend less demanding institutions or institutions better adapted to support their learning needs. Other admitted students at the top end of these ranges might have many alternatives to the University of Massachusetts Amherst with lower cost or higher merit-based financial aid. Note that these considerations apply to all students, whatever their racial and ethnic category.

Financial Support--Recognizing the financial challenges of attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst, especially for students from families with fewer financial resources, the campus provides a wide variety of need-based aid. Although the packaging of financial aid is complex and must follow a wide range of federal and state guidelines, the following indicators may help place the student support provided in perspective. Black, African-American students receive on average approximately \$3,847 in Need-Based and Non-Need Based financial aid per person. Hispanic-Latino students receive on average \$3,266 in financial aid, and White, non-Hispanic students receive on average \$2,462 in financial aid. These differences do not reflect racial distinctions, which are illegal, but instead reflect the different economic circumstances of the families within each racial ethnic category. Clearly, the campus invests a substantial portion of its financial aid resources in support, although we do not know whether we invest enough.

Special Programs for Recruiting Minority Students

These aggregate data offer some general guidance about the success of the campus in recruiting, admitting, and enrolling students, but they do not speak to the special programs that have proven very successful in identifying and recruiting minority students into higher education and in encouraging minority students to pursue advanced degrees.

The following is a list of the nationally recognized programs that take place on this campus and that have made this campus' leadership national resources for the effective promotion of high-quality minority student recruitment, retention, and advanced study.

School of Management DiMES Program

The primary goal of the Diversity in Management Education Services is to increase the number of students of color exposed to the management curriculum and all its divisions. Counselors from Isenberg School of Management recruit high school students throughout New England. During the academic year the DiMES staff visits high schools and attend college fairs.

School of Engineering: Minority Engineering Program

The Minority Engineering Program retains and successfully graduates traditionally underrepresented minority students (African-American, Native American, Hispanic, and Cape Verdean descendent with U.S. citizenship or permanent U.S. residence) in the field of engineering. MEP staff actively recruits students through visits to high schools in Massachusetts and college fairs nationwide.

School of Nursing: Embracing the Challenge

With Massachusetts and much of the nation facing a growing shortage of registered nurses over the next 15 years, the School of Nursing at UMass Amherst is launching a three-year, federally funded, effort to recruit more minority and disadvantaged students to the field. The program is funded with \$957,755 Nursing Workforce Diversity Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The goal of Embracing the Challenge is to increase the percentage of minority nursing students enrolling at the local community colleges and UMass Amherst by 20 percent while ratcheting up the percentage of disadvantaged minority juniors and seniors in the School of Nursing from 15 percent to 25 percent of the school's total enrollment.

National Science Foundation (NSF) Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) Project

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is leading a consortium of colleges and universities with assistance from a NSF AGEP Project grant to assist underrepresented minority persons seeking advanced degrees in science, mathematics, technology, and engineering. Recognizing the need for a highly skilled work force and the lack of minority applicants for these positions, UMass Amherst is at the forefront of the charge to assist minorities with graduate studies and postdoctoral fellows.

Louis S. Stokes Program (LSAMP)

The Northeastern Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, supported by the National Science Foundation, supports students from under-represented populations in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. This northeastern regional alliance is composed of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Northeastern University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The primary goal of this Alliance is to double over five years the enrollment, retention, and graduation of under-represented minority STEM students beyond that possible through the initiative on any single institution. Each partner participates in Alliance wide activities in addition to offering LSAMP-supported activities on their own campus. Currently, direct support to undergraduate students is offered in the form of research opportunities, pre-college and college academic preparation, and graduate school support. We are currently working with Susan Goldstein from Learning Resource Center and Greg Brown from Minority Engineering Program to recruit first year ALANA students to participate in the program.

School of Education ACELA Project

This program funded by two significant multi-year federal grants, provides for initial and advanced preparation to enhance English language acquisition.

Community Diversity and Social Justice (CDSJ)

The University of Massachusetts Amherst has a long history of attention to diversity and social justice issues. Beginning with the vision and commitment of

Chancellor David Scott and continuing his team's work into the present, the focus of CDSJ has been to create a more inclusive and equitable learning, working, and living environment. The desire to improve the quality of the UMass Amherst learning community through a systematic change process focused on Community, Diversity, and Social Justice are central to the mission of the university. Our vision is of a university community that is purposeful, just, open and honest, where intellectual life is central, where dignity of all is affirmed, where equality of opportunity is vigorously pursued, where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected, and civility is powerfully affirmed.

Advising, Support, and Cultural Programs

More problematic than the constant challenge of recruitment and retention of students is the quality of advising, support, and cultural programs that build a quality campus life. Many people, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends of the campus have worked to develop programs to support minority students in their academic and personal lives, as well as build cultural centers and activities that benefit the entire campus community and promote the engaged student experience that every study finds critical to student success. While these programs have had considerable success, in recent years the campus has experienced a crisis of confidence in the effectiveness and efficacy of the entire institutional support structure that affects the life of minority students. The voices that speak to this crisis range from the insistent and angry, to the quiet and personal. The voices represent people of every racial, ethnic, and cultural group, and while the conversation may appear polarized between majority and minority communities, such is not the case. Both majority and minority individuals have opinions and concerns that cross all divisions on the campus—faculty, student, staff, minority, and majority. Some voices are louder than others, some more definitive in their expression of causes and effects, but all reflect a profound campus concern that the system we have in place to support minority students and create a diverse and effective campus are not performing as well as we expect.

The solutions proposed are as disparate as the voices. Some see a better time in the past to which we might return, some see the current structure as potentially effective if managed correctly, and others believe that neither the past nor the present provide a good model, and believe that a new perspective is required to accelerate the improvements everyone agrees we need. These improvements can take many forms. They can involve reorganization of campus offices to consolidate or disperse functions, increased investment in key programs, and many other measures designed to achieve a better campus. Probably some combination of measures will be required. The campus conversation on this topic requires a moment of reflection leading to change, an opportunity to focus on the purpose and goals we expect to achieve and to design the best method, using the best experience of our colleagues around the country with similar challenges, and making the essential investments required. The campus has no doubt that doing the right things will require some new investment, but to make that investment effectively we will need some guidance and help.

Charting the Future

To that end, the Chancellor, Provost, and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs have established Commission on Campus Diversity with strong national leadership to provide an opportunity to understand our challenges better and to design a strategy to implement the many improvements everyone recognizes are necessary. The commission, appointed by the Chancellor, the Provost, and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, will begin meeting November 13, 2004, and will provide the campus with its guidance by early in the Spring semester. In response to its recommendations, which the campus will post on the UMass Amherst website, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will implement a plan to address the issues following the advice of the Commission. The Chancellor, Provost, and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will provide the resources required to implement the Vice Chancellor's plan to address the critical issues as identified by the Commission.

The Commission, as outlined in its charge, will meet with campus and other constituencies as needed. It will receive whatever communications members of our campus community choose to provide it, and it will have the full support of the institution for data, information, or other needs. The campus will provide the Commission with a complete inventory of all offices, activities, programs, and personnel that directly or indirectly affect the recruitment, retention, and experience of our students.

The Commission on Campus Diversity has the following membership:

- Chair: Orlando Taylor, Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate School, Howard University
- Rosio Alvarez, Executive Director/Deputy CIO, Information Technologies, UMass Amherst
- Eduardo Bustamante, President, Student Government Association, UMass Amherst
- Joyce Bylander, Associate Provost, Campus Academic Life, Dickinson College
- Jules Chametzky, Professor Emeritus, English Department, UMass Amherst
- Martha Escobar, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admission, UMass Amherst
- Sidonio Ferreira, Assistant Dean, Support Services, UMass Amherst
- Ruth Ellen Fitch, President and Chief Executive Officer, Dimock Community Health Center
- Anne Herrington, Chair, Department of English, UMass Amherst
- Frances Horowitz, President, The Graduate Center, City University of New York
- Bailey Jackson, Associate Professor, School of Education, UMass Amherst
- Arthur Jemison, Senior Project Manager, Massachusetts Port Authority, and UMass Amherst Alumnus
- Howard Johnson, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of North Texas
- Pamela Marsh-Williams, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Advising, UMass Amherst
- Ernie May, Secretary of the Faculty Senate, Professor of Music, UMass Amherst
- Mathew Ouellett, Associate Director, Center for Teaching, UMass Amherst
- Robert Ringel, Professor of Audiology and Speech Sciences, Purdue University

- Vanessa Rivera, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, College of Engineering, UMass Amherst
- Uri Strauss, President, Graduate Student Senate, UMass Amherst
- Ben Swan, 11th Hampden District State Representative (Springfield, Mass.)
- Carlos Vargas-Aburto, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Central State University (Ohio)
- Esther Terry, Ex-Officio, Associate Chancellor for Equal Opportunity and Diversity, UMass Amherst

This campus is in the Commission's debt for its willingness to participate in the challenge we have set for ourselves. This campus's success depends on its ability to find solutions to its challenges, to seek ways of focusing its efforts on those solutions, and to focus on the future, the only part of human life we can change.