Rich Choice of Opportunities Recommendations

1. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs should coordinate efforts to provide multiple avenues for inculcating study skills, research practices, and mechanisms for dealing with the freedoms and challenges of college life, including consideration of using 4-credit General Education Courses in a more intentional way to focus on them.

*Rationale:* The UMass System’s “report card,” “UMass Performance: Accountable and on the Move” [hereafter UMP] includes among its major goals improving “student success, retention, and graduation rates” and fostering “supportive, diverse campus environments, where students can do their very best work.” The recently launched First Year Intelligence (FYI) and SophoMORE initiatives represent a good start, but the Committee believes that a more integrated and sustained approach is necessary.

2. The iCons (Integrated Concentration in Science) and BDIC programs should be evaluated for best practices that might serve as a model for future interdisciplinary programs.

*Rationale:* Students at UMass and nationally have increasingly pursued multiple majors and minors, signaling a salutary interest in multiple fields and modes of inquiry. Interdisciplinary programs could lead to similar ends with a more focused and integrated curriculum.

3. Certificate programs should be encouraged and supported if they: a) provide a useful credential; b) relate directly to professional preparation; or c) involve cross-disciplinary work. There should be dedicated website contained information on all certificate programs, with links to fuller descriptions of the programs and to the instructions for proposing new ones. There should be a mechanism for evaluating current and proposed programs which would consider the value added and the costs.

*Rationale:* Certificate programs could greatly enhance the undergraduate experience, but need to be weighed against other factors, including increased time to baccalaureate degree, with its attendant costs.

4. Accelerated Master’s programs, like internships, should be encouraged, but only in cases of demonstrable value to students. It may be useful for some programs, particularly in HFA and SBS, to explore creating an accelerated MA that would include secondary-school teaching certification. The Graduate School should continue its efforts to advise undergraduates on research fellowships, Fulbright scholarships, and the STEM Diversity Institute.

*Rationale:* As with certificate programs, accelerated MA programs should be related to students’ professional development, as would a program in teacher certification.
5. Internships, in which the campus already has a strong record of participation, should be encouraged and supported. The campus should partner with the business community to create more paid internships, along the lines of the State Street Initiative.

*Rationale:* Current career-advice literature recommends that each student pursue three internships or comparable experiences. For students who work to pay some of all of their educational expenses, unpaid internships may not represent a viable option.

6. Participation in international education including study abroad, faculty-led programs, and international service-learning and internships, should be encouraged and supported. Professional schools should pursue articulation agreements with particular universities to enable their students to study abroad.

*Rationale:* Like internships and service learning, study abroad is regarded as a “high impact” practice by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. It benefits students, faculty, and the campus as a whole. Articulation agreements would allow students in professional programs with relatively inflexible curricula to study abroad without extending their time to degree.

7. Increased participation in service learning and community engagement should be encouraged and supported. The campus should coordinate the administration of all course-based and voluntary service-learning activities, list all approved SL and CE courses on SPIRE, and provide the necessary resources (including TAs where appropriate) for faculty creating and offering service-learning courses.

*Rationale:* UMP states that the UMass system should “incorporate experiential learning opportunities that complement classroom learning, such as service learning and internships.” This not only broadens and deepens the educational experience for students, but also enhances the University’s presence in communities across the Commonwealth, and around the nation and the world.