

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE**

628th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate – March 11, 2004

ADDRESS BY MICHAEL GARGANO, VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AND CAMPUS LIFE

By March 21st, every single student will have his/her financial aid package in the mail. We think that this is going to be a big benefit to us. All the credit should go to Mr. Dubach, because he forced us all to be ahead of schedule so that PeopleSoft could be implemented.

In Admissions, a big part of our business is “conversion.” The first part was “inquiries” – the second part was “reading applications” – and the third part now is “admitting,” which means converting those “admitted” students into “deposited” students. We are projecting that we would have a yield of 31 percent. This percent is based on a 77 percent admit rate, which is less than the admit rate for last year. We believe we will end up with a class of around 4250 students, which we are easily able to accommodate within our residence halls.

I’ll talk to you a little bit about some of the conversion techniques we’re using. Back in the Fall, when we were actually recruiting students, we hosted a number of receptions – both in-state and out-of-state. The out-of-state receptions were in New York, New Jersey, and Chicago. Those seemed to prove very successful, as we’ve had a lot of applications from those particular areas. In the latter part of this month, and the first two weeks of April, we will host other national-type receptions in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. These will be in addition to the open houses being hosted here on campus.

Another new plan, called “Minuteman Round-Up,” means that every single student has received a telephone call from a current UMASS student in an effort to connect the students peer-to-peer. Through this effort, we’re also able to answer any questions that the students may have. To date, we’ve made 12,000 phone calls. The second part of “Minuteman Round-Up” happens in the Fall – when students come back. In the latter part of September, we will call every student in the freshman class to make sure that each is settled in and that all is going according to plan. This will build a whole series of communications and connections with this particular entering class.

We’ve also changed a lot of our marketing and collateral materials. Our new admission packet is done in beautiful maroon University colors with the University seal. When you open it, right on the front it says “Offer of Admission.” So it’s a very classy piece, and I’ve heard back from a number of students and families who seem to be very happy with it. Three weeks ago, we also sent out another packet to all admitted students. This includes a mini viewbook of the University and a “Spring Visit” piece inviting them to campus. We thought it was very important – in the month of April, leading up to May 1st – that there be something in front of them with the “University of Massachusetts at Amherst” on it, explaining the type of education and experience they would receive here at the University. A lot of what I just said also gets enhanced by the deans and the schools themselves, because the deans are also hosting a number of receptions during the month of April. Likewise, they have a calling plan in which they call newly-admitted students and answer any school-specific questions that might come up.

I also want to share with you what has been happening in our Visitors’ Center. In the month of February – one of the coldest months on record – we had nearly 1400 visitors come through the Visitors’ Center to visit campus. That’s approximately 600 more than the year before. On the surface, that’s all great news. They go to dining services and eat our food, and they like the food, which sends a signal to them that this place is “ok.” Then they go to the bookstore and buy a UMASS sweatshirt or cap or bumpersticker, and that becomes good news again, because they put it on their car, and everyone sees it when they travel around town. But with 1400 visitors, it also means that we run out of a lot of the brochures and pamphlets we would normally have on hand. Plus, you have 1400 visitors who suddenly need parking on the campus. So we anticipate that kind of activity to continue as we start to move forward with our marketing plan.

Part of our marketing plan is based upon a lot of national demographics. You may have read in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that, basically, states in the Northeast for the next decade, high school graduates will either remain level or decrease a little. Knowing that, it then requires us to identify new primary markets, secondary markets, and tertiary markets which could be emerging markets as we move forward. We have identified these markets based upon a number of different characteristics. For example, they would be markets that we know to have major state universities; markets that we know will have double-digit growth in high school graduates; markets from which we have already gotten some previous applications from students; markets in which we have a major contingent of alumni; markets that we would play athletic contests in, in order to develop some presence. The areas that we’ve identified include the New York island and inner city region, New Jersey, and the Washington D.C. / Northern Virginia / Maryland area. We’ve never really recruited in that area. So we sent one of our admissions

counselors down there for two weeks. We now have 198 admitted students from that particular area. So that's one reason why we're headed back – to do these conversion receptions. We also think that Georgia is a major area for us, as well as Florida, Texas, Colorado, and California. The state of California is projected at about 50,000 students. All of those graduates will not be able to get into the state system. So, right now, they're going to Colorado because they like to ski. But we happen to think that right here in the Northeast we have some of the best skiing around. So one of our strategies is to use the “bad” weather to our advantage. One of the things we'll begin to do is promote the four seasons.

Another important change that has transpired in Admissions is the expansion of our Alumni Admissions Recruitment Program. We currently have about 500 alumni very actively engaged in this program. I'd like to recognize Elizabeth Dale and her staff for all the great work that they've done in assisting us with that. We see that number of alumni growing to about 1200 active alumni around the country who will help us recruit students, host receptions in their homes, and make connections with high schools, guidance counselors, principals, and personal resources to organize hosting events at locations that families might not necessarily have the opportunity to get into. For example, one of the things that we're looking at in New York City is trying to identify an alumnus who might have a connection with NBC studios. If we can host a New York reception at NBC studios, it sends a special message about the University that makes prospective students say, “Oh, look – if I come to the University of Massachusetts, look at the doors that are open for me.”

In addition, our new student program will see a number of adjustments this coming summer. We have created an Office of Parent Services that will open this Fall. This office will provide a number of positive benefits to the University. It will serve as the communication link between the family and the University. One of the things I've observed, in going to a number of receptions, is the number of first-generation parents that we have. In speaking with them, I've identified that they might not be keenly aware of the types of questions and issues that their sons and daughters are going to be facing on college campuses. We think that these parents – through a series of monthly communications with us – can serve a very instrumental role in helping us here at the University. For instance, we send out bills directly to students, because it's supposed to go to the actual person on record – they are the adult – and many times, the parent doesn't hear about it until weeks later when their son or daughter hasn't paid his/her bill and is going to be dismissed from the University. However, if we send out a communication directly to parents, alerting them to the University's invoice cycle and saying that the bills are being sent, then both the family and the University benefit.

We are also encouraging parents to actually attend Summer Orientation for the full two-and-a-half days so that they can start to see for themselves the type of experiences their sons or daughters will have here at the University. They'll actually become engaged in that particular process. We're probably a year away – two years at the most – from adding a sibling component, in order to actually get the whole family engaged in the experience. History tends to show that if the sibling comes along, in time, they're more likely to enroll in the University, too.

The other little change that we're making in Orientation is that we're going to have parent and student skits. Parent skits will probably be rated PG, while students will be R-rated. In general, they will cover any number of societal concerns and/or topics that are important to students transitioning from high school to college, including things such as eating disorders, roommate conflict, the code of academic integrity, campus safety and security, and diversity and multiculturalism. Each skit will be three-to-four minutes long and performed by our student leaders; it will raise the topic, then share the types of services and programs we have here on campus to address the issue. At the end of the skit, there will be break-out sessions to discuss the skits in greater detail. It will begin to set the stage for our expectation of student conduct and the types of experiences students might have here at the University. The benefit of having mom and dad here at Summer Orientation is that it then gives them the rest of the summer to go home and think about how they're going to communicate with their sons and daughters while they're away at school. Parents always ask me this one simple question: “My son or daughter is going off to college – am I going to have a good relationship with them?” I always ask them back, “Do you have a good relationship with them *now*?” and if they say, “Yes,” then I answer back, “Yes, then you'll probably have a good relationship – maybe even a better one.” But if their answer is “No,” then I say, “Well you should not expect it to get better when there is such a distance. However, here are some things that we'll be able to do to help you,” which is where the Office of Parent Services comes in. In the long term, the Office of Parent Services will ultimately help us to recruit students, because satisfied parents and satisfied students become our best ambassadors and best salespeople.