

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST  
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

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ADDRESS BY CHANCELLOR JOHN V. LOMBARDI

My job is to report to you on the status of our fundraising activity to date. What we're doing, as you know, is getting ready for a major campaign. In getting ready for a major campaign, the process is like gearing up for a big construction project; everything has to go in sequence, otherwise you don't get things done the way you want. Right now, we're in a process of doing three major activities.

The first of these is a Development Program Review. What this does is takes our consultants – who have really exceptional expertise in how high-powered development operations run – and it has them come in to do an audit of our development operations, including computer support, tracking, and prospect screening, as well as the way we manage prospects, deal with development officers, and organize the flow of activity. They have been on that process, and it should run from March to the end of July. We will then be done with the review of our Development Program to make sure that we have all the things in place to run this properly. There is a lot of risk in all of this if you don't do it right, so we want to be sure that the statistical underlying support and ability to prepare proposals and do reasonable feasibility testing is in place for the colleges, programs, and departments.

The second thing that goes on – partially at the same time, beginning this month – is what we call “Leadership Briefings.” A Leadership Briefing is a process whereby the University goes out to selected, relatively small groups of significant alumni and friends of the University who have both capacity and, on occasion, demonstrated performance in fundraising on our behalf. We bring them together in somebody's house or club or some place that is classy enough to reflect the level of enthusiasm we want them to show for their institution. We put them in a room with some folks who have already demonstrated their commitment to the institution, and we have a conversation about what it is that the campaign we're preparing is likely to do. So it's a briefing of the people who we expect to be leaders in the various parts of the campaign. Some will be leaders in some colleges, some in different programs. We try to cluster people both geographically and by interest, if we can identify that interest. This process gets them aware of the fact that we are in campaign mode. It identifies what the general goals of the campaign are and what the needs of the campuses are, in terms of what the colleges expect of us. The goal is not to prepare specific proposals, but rather to say, “Look, this is the picture of the University. Here is where its revenue package is that supports us today, here is what we have to maintain and enhance the competitive quality that has defined this place in the past and must define it in the future, and here is how we're going to go about the campaign; these are the themes, ideas, processes – the way it's likely to flow.” In that process, we get feedback from them on how they respond to the way in which we're beginning to shape the campaign. So, on one hand, it allows us to bring them up to speed. On the other hand, it allows them to tell us whether or not we're expressing a story they find plausible and interesting and exciting. This Leadership Briefing process takes until about mid-August. We will have gone through these leadership reviews in various places. A lot of them are in the greater Massachusetts region. Some of them go down into New York and Washington, depending on where we have clusters of high-quality alumni prospects.

The third thing that we'll be doing – which begins sometime this month and will continue until December of 2004 – is an External Constituency Assessment. This means trying to figure out where the money is. We look at who our people are, and we try to do an elaborate survey to determine what their interest and capacity in the University is. A lot of this is designed to figure out where to position the campaign. One of the hardest things to do in a campaign of this nature is to figure out our target. We don't want to target it too low, because that doesn't inspire people to achieve. We also don't want to target it too high, because that scares everybody to death. If they're scared, they'll think, “Well, it won't work,” so they hide in the weeds and they don't write the check and they don't introduce you to their friends that have money. So we have to scale it at a level that people feel is appropriate. We have to have some feedback from a large part of our potential donor group at different levels about what they think is interesting and important about the University – what themes ring their chimes, what issues concern them about the University – so that when we go out and sell this campus, we have a way to address things that are a problem, we have a way to emphasize things that are strengths, and we have a way to address all the pieces of the fundraising exercise. When we get done with all of this, by the end of December '04, we should be in a position to make a recommendation to our Foundation Board about how the campaign should roll, what kind of target we should be looking at, how we imagine it will take place, and how we think the gift pyramid is likely to fall out.

While we're doing all of this, in the background we're also doing something that has already started. That is, identifying the goals and projects and prospects for each of the colleges. As you know, while a campaign is a campus activity and people give to the campus and care about the campus, the principle hook is into a college and, within the college, into a specific department or program. That is what motivates people to make major gifts – the inspiration they get from the faculty, the inspiration that students provide them, the sense that they're going to transform some part of the campus which they are in love with and take it to a much higher level of quality, performance, and opportunity for students, faculty, staff, or external

constituencies. So part of this goal is to construct – for ourselves and each of the colleges – a menu of the things that each college, department, and program need in order to get better. That might be two more professorships, different kinds of space, a fund for certain kinds of support, endowed professorships, more scholarships for students, graduate students support, travel, or whatever else would make a difference in moving a college, program, or department into a higher level of competitive success. It's often multiple things. Within a department, we'll have different places where people need space or scholarships or endowed professorships. What we do is take that information and try to boil it down with the Provost into reasonable chunks that allow us to tell a specific story when we go speak to individual donors and address specific constituencies. So that process is very important, and it is almost entirely faculty-driven. I liken it to some kind of manufacturing business where you have sales over here, production over here, and engineering here. The engineering people have to design the product, because if the sales people sell something we can't deliver, we have a real problem. The key is to design the products that will make this institution better and more competitive on a national scale – make us more capable of defining what the agenda should be in each of our programs.

Now, we have some easy things that are not hard to figure out. If somebody wants to endow the reconstruction of Old Chapel, this is a straightforward thing. There it sits; we know what it takes to make it right. So if somebody is filled with enthusiasm for Old Chapel, we will find a way to translate that enthusiasm into a reconstructed, gorgeous space at the center of campus. That's straightforward and easy. But it is not so easy to tell donors what it will take to move the Chemistry Department one more step up in the competition amongst the finest chemistry departments in the nation or what it will take to translate the Fine Arts program into a higher level of performance or to make the History Department more nationally competitive. That's not so obvious. So we need to construct these things. Eventually, what we get is a campaign program that we then roll out and use as the template when going around the world talking to our friends and neighbors.

We don't know yet what the target amount is for this campaign or the length of time we ought to run it. Traditionally, these campaigns have been about five years long; two years are done in a quiet phase, getting ready by identifying major donors to lead the campaign, getting everything organized, etc; then you have three years of public "push" to drive it over the target. However, today, in more and more institutions, people are looking at longer campaigns. They're looking at seven-year campaigns, because in the seven-year campaign, you can go after larger totals and get people engaged in a roll that isn't quite so quick but perhaps more sustaining. We will have to work with our consultants to figure out which approach is most effective after they've surveyed our constituency. Our experience in fundraising, while it has demonstrated that we could do it and that our donors wanted to give, is not very long. We've had one campaign, and we're now starting up our second. We don't have the depth of experience that other big public universities have, so we are going to rely pretty extensively on the advice and counsel of our consultants who are fast at work helping us shape this conversation.

The good news is that everything is on track and on target. Everything is running according to the calendar that we set out, which gives us the sense that it will be successful. We haven't run into anything that would indicate a problem. When we talk to our alumni and friends about the campaign, their response is always, "Good. This is terrific. How can I help?" So we're finding a great deal of enthusiasm for this process. Our job is to organize – with the faculty, deans, provost and other key administration – a program that is effective. That is where we are at the moment.

So that's my update. I'd be happy to answer any questions about the process of the campaign, where it's going, or what it's doing at this time.