

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST  
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

From the 631<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Faculty Senate held on May 6, 2004.

ADDRESS BY REPRESENTATIVE PETER V. KOCOT (D-FIRST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT)

Good afternoon. As you have heard, my name is Peter Kocot. I'm the State Representative from the First Hampshire District, which encompasses Northampton, Southampton, Westhampton, Hatfield, and Montgomery, so it's a very large district geographically. Does anyone here live in that district? A couple of people? Good. Hi – how are you? I am actually an honorary Amherst resident for a number of reasons. My mother, Dorothy, was raised in Amherst – first on Summer Street, then on Blue Hills Road. My grandfather had the first liquor license in Amherst after prohibition, which he was very proud of, and he, at one time, owned what was known as Pansy Park, which now is the old Townhouse Restaurant out on Route 9. Prior to World War II, it sold the most kegs of beer of any place in western Massachusetts on a weekend. My grandfather, Vincent, lived on Blue Hills Road and was proud of telling all of the professors from Amherst College and UMASS who lived on Blue Hills Road that they knew nothing about lawn care. My grandfather was a self-made man who retired prior to age 50 and spent all of his waking hours working on his lawn. His lawn was perfect. There was not a dandelion on it, and he would tell everyone that. In fact, the current sheriff of Hampshire County, Bob Garvey, tells the tale of how students from UMASS Turf Management would actually come to his home and examine his lawn because it was so good. It was just a fantastic lawn. Many of you are probably wondering what the lawn looks like now. Well, a UMASS professor bought it, and it looks like hell. So I guess it's true that professors really don't know that much about lawn care.

The purpose of my comments today is to talk about where we are in the Commonwealth, what's happening in terms of the budget, and what I see the current trends as being. We're also here to talk about all the great stuff that UMASS does and what I would like to see happen here. Clearly, my only goal is to make UMASS the absolute best public university in the nation. When you look at the UMASS website, it's hard to comprehend why the Legislature and the Governor and everyone else in the political process isn't leaping up and down saying, "We've gotta get more cash out to Amherst." From the website: \$100 million dollars in research funding; \$40 million for your advanced weather center; Ray Bradley and Michael Mann cited as world experts on global warming; a world-class Isenberg School of Management; a world-class Polymer Research Center, where 15 percent of all Ph.D.'s in this subject matter are from UMASS; a world-class School of Education; a world-class Computer Department ranked ninth in the nation; seventh in the nation in research grant funding for nanotechnology; people such as John Edgar Wideman, the two-time PEN/Faulkner Award winner. This is a very high-quality place, in terms of learning. It can be the best. My challenge, and the challenge of my colleagues, is to get more resources from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We need to get more resources from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – not just to fund all this great stuff, but also to foster a real commitment on the part of the Governor's office and the Legislature in making this institution a success.

This year, comparatively speaking, was not all that bad in the House process regarding the budget. We just wrapped up about a week ago. Originally, there was a proposal for a three percent cut. Through the hard work of folks like Ellen Story and her colleagues, we were able to knock that down to about one percent. If you add in the \$66 million in funding for the contracts, the UMASS system actually comes ahead of last year. The budget process now moves over to the Senate. The Senate is going to start in about a week. That process only takes about a week in the Senate. Once they're finished, both the House and the Senate will start work on a Conference Committee to reconcile the House version with the version from the Senate. Both branches then vote up or down, no amending, on the Conference Report. That then goes to Governor Romney for his perusal/vetoes, and then that will come back to us after a ten-day period. It's my estimate that, at this point, that process should be done by mid-June. After that's done, we then look at the vetoes and have an opportunity to act on those. Because this is the second year of the legislative cycle, we are done by the 31<sup>st</sup> of July this year. So it's a relatively tight window in terms of doing overrides of vetoes. When the media and your colleagues start to report on those vetoes, you can play an active role in not only speaking to me and Ellen Story and your legislators, but also as a university, speaking out in terms of things that you need to happen. Out of the entire list of vetoes – let's say last year there were approximately 400 – the House overrode less than 200 of those. So your job at that point is to make sure that your vetoes get to the top of that list.

Last night I was driving down King Street in Northampton. If you've ever been on that road, you'll see all sorts of stuff happening – people running, trucks, tons of traffic, all kinds of things on your mind. I was listening to WFCR and processing what was happening there on one eighth of my brain, and the rest of it was working on various short- and long-term projects. I caught just a couple of words, and those words were "transformational leadership" and "Burns." So I tuned out everything else that was happening in my mind and tried to listen to the end of this program. The thesis of this commentator on WFCR was that somehow George Walker Bush had utilized this theory of "transformational leadership" in the war in the Middle East and that this was a wonderful thing which had brought him great success among some theorists out there in Alexandria or Washington or wherever. I was fascinated.

So today, I went on the internet and started to research this theory. It also brought me back to last year and the budget. Last year was a really bad year; UMASS was cut substantially; the Chancellor had no options and had to make some serious cuts in programs here. We worked maybe 90 hours on the document. All of my colleagues and I – John Scibak, Ellen Story, Chris Donelan, Steve Kulik – worked very hard on behalf of UMASS. Nonetheless, there were huge cuts. After weeks of battling the Speaker – weeks of long hours, not talking to my wife or kids – I got a phone call. Now, we’ve all had those weeks where you really have no patience left. A man calls me and identifies himself as a professor from UMASS. He says, without any sort of introduction, that “we” haven’t done enough. He’s saying “we” but he’s meaning *me*. I very politely listened to him as he explained the importance of UMASS and all the different programs at UMASS. He finished up, and I said that after this is all done, I’d love to sit down and talk with him. So I hung up the phone and almost snapped it in half. I walked out onto the House floor and went over to Ellen Story. All of you who know Ellen know she has a very soft-spoken southern drawl. She’s very polite, smart, and conscious of manners. I said, “Ellen, I just got this phone call from this guy who says he’s from UMASS, says his name is Clawson. I don’t know the guy..” and I’m looking at her, and she’s kind of smiling, so I did a sort of “Vulcan mind melt” right there on her and realized that she’s probably thinking about how this 6’ 7” 300-pound Sasquatch is going to find this guy and not be very nice to him. She very politely said, “Well, Peter, Professor Clawson is one of your constituents,” and I said, “Oh. Ok. Very good. Ok,” still fuming. Then she said, “Well I think we should sit and talk to him and work this out.” So she and I spoke. Now, fast-forward to this year: I’ve come to a point where I realize that Ellen was right, and Professor Clawson was absolutely right. We had not done enough. *We* have not done enough for UMASS. And Burns is right; the old types of leadership that I was raised under in the House of Representatives – where I worked for about 23 years – those types of leadership that we normally tend to think of in those relationships aren’t adequate. I think we need to look at this “transformational leadership” idea and look at power and how our relationships with people relate to power.

We need to move away from the concept that one or a few people can get a group to follow that person’s lead and that that’s enough. We need to look to our mutual motivations, our needs and wants, and those who have political power and their motivations and needs. We have to understand them better. Burns talks of a sense of possibility, motivation, creativity, and two-way relationships. He also writes that conflict and crisis can galvanize “transformational leadership.” Burns contrasts that type of leadership with “transactional leadership” – transactional leadership being characterized as that interaction where no long-term purpose holds the parties together. There is no mutual and continuing pursuit of a worthwhile purpose, whereas “[transformational] leadership” creates a lasting relationship and implies a moral purpose. Leaders and followers raise each other to new levels of motivation and morality. This process raises each level of human conduct and the aspirations of both the leader and the led. Thus, it has a transforming effect on both. I would also surmise that, when this is truly successful, the line that separates leader and led is blurred – to an extent that all are working as one, in a way that maximizes the skill sets of both.

So how do we move towards this model? How do we transform ourselves in this political process to provide UMASS with more state resources? We’ve had students and parents lobby us. We have a new President and a great Chancellor. I just want to say, on the record, I think he’s the best thing that’s happened on UMASS in many many years. I have great colleagues out here in western Massachusetts; every one of them makes UMASS a priority. However, west of Worcester, we have only 11 percent of the population, which means far fewer legislators than eastern Massachusetts. Power is clearly concentrated in the hands of a few in Boston, at the State House. This University, like it or not, is tied to that political power base in ways that – in some cases – preclude fundamental change. As I was searching for ideas, I found this website called “workingmanager.com” which has a small explanation for a concept called “a skunkworks.” I just want to read this to you:

“Skunkworks were made famous, perhaps, by Lockheed in the 1940’s. A ‘skunkworks’ is essentially an informal, quasi-legal, off-line entity set up to create and pilot new ideas and products without the cold hand of the existing bureaucracy. The very name, connoting smelly, down-home, good old boys, implies much of the meaning. A ‘skunkworks’ is never on the main site, is not subject to normal rules or controls, and is usually under-funded so that its members have to make do and mend. It often has a temporary existence and is protected from the bureaucrats by a powerful champion. The Lockheed skunkworks, under the direction of Clarence ‘Kelly’ Johnson was responsible for most of that company’s airplane innovation in the 1940’s and 1950’s.”

I propose that we start something like “skunkworks” – an entity that is outside of the normal organizations and techniques that we have been using in the past. I propose that this group have one goal, and that is to make UMASS the best public university in the nation. A side goal would be that, by the fiscal year 2008, UMASS sees at least a five percent increase in its appropriation from the previous year. I propose that this group look to UMASS – its professors, employees, and students – as the transformational leaders, while the power structure – legislators and the administration – is seen as those that should be led. I look forward to working with you on this, and I’d be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.