

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

From the 641st meeting of the Faculty Senate held on April 28, 2005.

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

Thank you for inviting me. Today is April 28th and May 1st is right around the corner, so I thought that I would just share with you where we are with admissions. The University received this year 20,500 applications. Those applications represent 48 different states. Fifty-three percent of the applicants are female. Forty-three percent of the applicants applied online. When you take that total pool of 20,500, the average SAT score of those particular students is 1155. That represents nearly a 10% increase from the previous year. From that particular pool, we are expecting a freshman class of 4,200. These students represent a variety of different academic disciplines, different majors, and an extremely broad range of extracurricular activities as well. Also, to go along with that, as you have probably been on campus for the last month, you have probably witnessed a lot of visitors.

For the seven key months of open houses that we have that start in July and go through April, we have seen nearly a 29% increase in the number of on-campus visitors, which we think is absolutely fantastic. I think in the admissions area and folks being interested in our particular institution, this is really a compliment to the University. I think it is a compliment to our faculty, a compliment to our staff and deans, and particularly to our student body, because I think what all of these families are really saying to us is that, "I place a lot of value at UMass Amherst and it is really a place that I would love to have my sons and daughters go and continue their education."

As far as we would stand year to date with deposits, we are exactly on track where we need to be. We are right on the same number that we were at last year at this particular point in time. As we said, once summer melt is completed, we will have a freshman class of 4,200.

I also want to share with you two new initiatives that we are undertaking this year. One is happening during New Students Program Orientation. In a collaboration with Academic Affairs, one of the things that we noticed the last couple of years is that the number of students coming to Orientation and actually being prepared to decide what set of classes that they would like to take did not seem to be at a very high level. So one of the new strategies that we have put in place this year is that students are going to be completing a tentative academic worksheet before they ever arrive for Orientation. What that will actually do is require students to go and really consider which set of classes they may want to take in their particular major; they actually start to think immediately academics and start to think scholarly work and engaging with those types of activities. When that sheet comes in, Jean Horrigan, who is our Director of New Students Orientation, will then pass it on to the Academic Advisors. It will immediately be able to start that discussion that is so necessary with the advisors and what set of classes to take.

The second new initiative that we are undertaking will occur in the fall. All of our students will receive a student planner. The student planner is going to be on the line of a Stephen Covey type of planner. It will help us with time management and organizational skills. One of the things that we have recognized is, for some set of students, some organization is healthy and would be good. Also, what we have recognized is that really what is the most important day in a student's life is Sunday. Sunday is important, in particular, Sunday evening is important because, if we start to plan on Sunday and get organized on Sunday, exactly what it is we are going to do on Monday, Monday will be a better day for us. In our student planner and in our residence halls, we are going to spend considerably more time in working with students on being organized and planning out what Monday should be, and then what Tuesday should be, and so on and so forth. Again, that is not necessarily needed for every single student, but there are some students that that type of assistance will help out immensely.

The other part of this—and we are collaborating with Academic Affairs as well—it is part of this whole planning concept—that it is one thing attending class and physically being in class, but there is another whole concept of, "how do I prepare to go to class, so I can engage in the scholarly conversation that goes on?" It is going to be another joint initiative between Academic and Student Affairs as we go forward with our student planner and other types of initiatives that we think, in the end, will have a major impact on student retention, and as student retention goes on, will obviously impact graduation as well.

I just wanted to take a few minutes to thank you for all your great efforts in helping us in our student recruitment initiatives. Clearly, students are coming to this particular institution because of the quality and breadth and depth of our academic offerings and certainly because of our faculty. There is a strong belief in our education and I want to thank you on behalf of myself and everybody else in Student Affairs for all of those great things that you do. Thank you very much.