

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

From the 655th meeting of the Faculty Senate held on September 21, 2006.

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As you know, we have been on a path of recovering from a relatively dramatic budget reduction cycle, and as those who have lived here longer than me know, these things do come with depressing regularity. Nonetheless, we are in a positive mode at the present time and it is useful for us to have a frame of reference, so I asked the experts to give me some data and a chart, and I did not understand it, so I asked them to simplify it, and I still did not understand it, so I asked them to simplify it some more, and finally we have it simple enough that I understand it, I think, and I will try to explain it. This is what the state does for us, well, for us and to us. This gives you a sense of what has happened to state funding for public higher education as reflected on our campus over this period of time from FY 2001 to what we think we are going to have this year. So, as you see, way back there in 2001, which some of you may remember as the good old days, it was here from the state. Then, of course, they just killed us and then they totally trashed us, and then it eked back a little bit, then we got a little bit more and we had a little bit more, but we still, from our state funding, have not achieved the same level that we had back in 2001. Moreover, probably, there has been a little inflation in the intervening time: stuff costs more, energy prices have gone up, things have gotten more complicated, nonetheless, that is what has happened. Now, the difference is made up, of course, by non-state money. The largest chunk of non-state money, for the most part, is student fees and we all know what happened to student fees, because it was the student fees that saved the University of Massachusetts Amherst from the huge impact of the budget cuts. So, even though we reduced a lot of things during that period, our ability to sustain the academic program, sustain the faculty, not have to go through layoffs or program reductions or anything of that kind in the academic part, was due entirely to the support of the students and their willingness to say “yes, we prefer to invest in the academic program rather than have less expensive tuition and a shrunken program.” That is why you see the non-state going up. Now these things on top are the salary increases and those, while they are from the state and they are good things and we love them, they do not increase our capacity to do anything. They simply sustain our salaries at a level that is at least reasonable. Reasonable, it is not generous, and has allowed us to function and remain competitive, more or less, in the marketplace. That is not money that replaces this money; that simply carries our contracts forward, allows us to have reasonable salaries. So, that is where we are today.

Now, in that process, we have been successful nonetheless in doing certain things that are very important for the institution, the most important of which is, in the first instance, to replace the faculty who have left through retirement. We are in the process now; when people leave, we replace them. Secondly, we are starting the process of increasing the total number of faculty so that we can bring them back to some level that is nationally competitive. As you know, we are trying to impress upon everybody that we need to have a faculty size somewhere in the 1100-1200 category if we are going to be at the level of competitiveness that we are really mandated to be as a major public research university. With the Amherst 250 Plan, we went out to the legislature and we said, “Look, invest in this institution. Invest in this institution because it is the only major public research university in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and we require an extra amount of money to be able to bring our faculty size up to a competitive level, not to mention needing a significant infusion of capital money from the state to deal with the extraordinarily deteriorated facilities and physical plant that we all know so well and love.” The legislature, while they were sympathetic to this notion, did not see any rationale for treating UMass Amherst any differently than any other public institution, especially in the UMass system. While they did increase the amount of money that came to the public universities, our share of that conversation has stayed exactly the same for both last year and this year. Our share of the state revenue that comes to the UMass system is determined by an obscure historically-derived formula, which is exceedingly stable, and so we have gotten our share. There is nothing wrong with that, we are happy to get our share, but unfortunately, we have not yet persuaded our legislature that they should invest differentially in supporting a major public research university.

Now, in spite of that and on that basis, everybody has been working to try and increase the number of faculty. At the current time, between last year and this year, the University, through the Provost’s Office, has been able to make a commitment to sustain an addition of about 73 new faculty lines on top the replacement cycle. Now, those have not all been filled. Some of them are pending, some of them will be filled this year, some were filled last year, some will be filled next year and so forth, but the total number that have been committed to increase the faculty size is about 73. We would like to have it more, and depending on how much it costs to hire faculty members in this year, we may be able to increase that, but at this moment that is our ability to guarantee an increase in the faculty size. At that rate, we are not going to add 250 faculty members in a short period of time. Nonetheless, even though we have not received extra money, we have found a way to do this.

What limits the ability to expand the faculty, with the funds that we have received from the state, to some extent is the demand and the necessity of solving the most urgent Physical Plant problems that we have on this campus. We have, as you know, a lot of “New Dirt” going on. All the “New Dirt” that you see is currently funded, but we do not have funded the next cycle of repairs, renovations, safety enhancements, roof fixings, all the things that are going to hit us in the next two to three years. We have to begin to get ready to deal with that amount of money that will be looking at us in the face and that we won’t be able to escape. We are looking for two things here: the first is to persuade the legislature and the Governor’s Office that they should

fund the Physical Plant needs of this campus, because these are state buildings, these are state entities. It is ridiculous that we should attempt to deal with the Physical Plant and capital issues of this campus off of the operating budget. That is simply not a reasonable way to run the institution. Nonetheless, if they don't do it, we have to do something in order to maintain this place functioning at a high level of effectiveness and efficiency. So we have set aside a chunk of money out of this portion to begin the process of being able to deal with the most urgent issues in the academic space, and sometime in the next month or so, we will come back with a display that shows you where we think these issues are.

Let me give you some examples of how this works. We have lots of old buildings, many of which you know and love. Well, let me rephrase that. Many of which you know. These buildings are functional today, but the first thing that happens to them that requires us to fix them in any significant way (the roof leaks, the window frames start to come apart, the seams start to break, any major leakages in the major pipes), any of those things that happen will require us to invest a huge amount of money, because to fix them, we have to bring the whole building up to code. We are not able just to go in and patch the pipe. We have to go in and we have break the walls, we have to get the pipe, we have to put the pipe in, and when you break the wall, then you have to bring the building up to code. When you replace the roof, you have to do a ton of other things in order for the building to be occupied. Many of these buildings are in a situation that, once we decide that we have to fix the roof and we figure out what it costs to bring the building up to code, we have a number like \$600 per square foot. At \$600 per square foot, we have to confront the question: should we keep the building? Because at \$600 per square foot, you can build another building that is about twice as big, or once and a half again as big and functional and new and it works. This kind of a decision process is very difficult, and we are not quite ready to come to grips with it because we do not know enough, so we hired some consultants to go through our buildings and help us identify all of the things that need to be done in each building, identify how much we estimate it will cost to do those things, and figure out in what time frame we are likely to be triggered to have to make a decision about whether we are going to do those things. So, our first frame of reference is two to three years. We say, the odds of the roof breaking over here, it is likely to happen in two to three years, the odds are very good. So, sometime in the next two to three years we are going to have to make a decision. How many items are in the two- to three-year window that are significant for academic affairs, that is the teaching and research mission of the University? Once we have that list, then we can put them in some kind of priority order, and we can be ready for the moment the first roof breaks with some frame of reference for making a decision about what to do next.

This process is much more elaborate and involved than we would like, but there is no escape from knowing what it is that we are going to have to do when we have to do it. Otherwise you respond to the first thing that happens when you really ought to be responding to the third thing that is going to happen, because the first thing that happens is not the most important, it is going to be the third thing that is the most important. We are trying to get them in a frame of reference so that we can bring them to the various committees of the Faculty Senate that are interested in this topic, review them, get their advice and counsel, talk to the deans, and talk to various other people who are interested in this subject, as well as having a clear, consistent, well-documented description of the challenges that face this campus so that our legislature will be able to comprehend the problem. Part of the difficulty with us is that we have more than one building, so, if we were Boston and we had one building and it was crummy, everybody could focus. They would say, \$60 million, terrible thing. Well, \$60 million is just like that for us. I mean that is a drop in the bucket for the problem we are looking at, except it is spread across a zillion buildings and so, if you look at one building, you say, "well, that's only a \$20 million problem, that's not so bad," you could handle that, but of course this one is a \$25 million problem and that one is a \$15 million problem. All of a sudden, you are looking at numbers that have many, many zeros. And so what we are going to do is try to package this in a rational way that allows us to see what are the first things that we are going to have to do sometime in the next two to three years, what are the things that are a little farther out, and then try and design a strategy that says, "okay, when this building goes, it's gone." We're not fixing it. The day that it breaks is the time that we say sayonara to that wonderful, old, charming building because it is falling down and will cost too much to fix. On the other hand, this charming building, when it is in trouble, is fixable, for a purpose, at x dollars per square foot. That makes some reasonable sense, so we will move everybody out, put them in swing space, fix the building and move them back in.

A classic example, of course, is Bartlett Hall. Some of you may know which one is Bartlett. If you live there, you probably know, and you may have noticed that we have rods that go through Bartlett Hall that hold the wall here and the wall here together so they do not fall apart. The other part of Bartlett Hall has wooden windows. They are very elegant looking and they have not been painted in 40 years, but they are elegant looking, and they tell me that if anybody leans too hard against them, we do not guarantee their survival. So we have to move in and fix those buildings and our calculation is that they can be fixed and brought back online at a cost that is less than replacing that building, because they are not high-tech buildings - they don't require fume hoods, they are mostly classroom buildings and office space, so we are in the process, you all know, of getting ready to deal with Bartlett Hall. That is already funded and on our repair list, so that was a decision that we could make.

There are some buildings that we are not so sure about. We do not know what to do with South College. Some of you could write me a note, tell me what I ought to do with South College. I mean, it has a certain gothic charm. I always thought it might be a set for one of those sort of horror movies where the lights blink and people run up and down the stairs. I got lost over there when I first got here. I thought it was a good thing to visit the college deans, seemed to be a useful thing, and so I

said "I'll go visit the dean of HFA," and I was going to go over there and I went in the wrong door. Now, it turns out in that building, you cannot get from the front door to where you ought to go in to the side door, but I didn't know this, so I went to the top door and I couldn't get in. I went down the left corridor, I went down the right corridor, I went upstairs and thought I could go over, I went downstairs and it was a mistake because I could see what a mess the building was. I mean, there were these little cubby holes where poor graduate students were packed in six to a room, and then there was bracing on the stairwells to keep it from falling down. It was not a good experience. So, my sense of South College is that it probably is a difficult building for us to decide what to do with when the roof breaks. When the roof breaks for South College, when we hear that it is leaking in there, when the riser pipes that go up to the top floor stop carrying water, then we will have to decide what to do about South College and it will not be easy. So we are trying to get the data together so that we can bring it back to everybody and we can all sort of get a sense of what our relative values are. While we love certain things, when we discover that it costs twice as much for the things we love as it does for things that are effective, we may decide we don't love them as much, but that will be a conversation we can all have as this thing moves forward.

So that is the state of play. We are working on the 73 new positions that are added onto our faculty base. Those will be worked out over the next two or three years as the faculty do the recruitment and hire the people. Once we make a commitment, that commitment stays in place, because we do not want anybody hiring anything but the best faculty, and we have been hiring absolutely superb faculty, as you all know, those of you have been involved in searches. They are really first-rate people and if we don't find first-rate people, we just wait and we go the next year and keep looking. Nobody is going to lose the position because they did not fill it this year. It will be there next year. The key to this process is recognizing that, while getting more people is critical to our success, we have got to get the right people. We have got to get first-rate people and we can get them, we can attract them. They want to come. When you meet the people we have recruited this past year that are coming on board this semester, it is a very impressive exhibition of faculty talent. I mean, it gives everybody a real sense that the future of this place is secure. We are pretty determined to support the departments and the faculty in this recruitment process. If it takes two years, it takes two years, the money is there. So that is how this thing will roll out.

I will be glad to answer any questions about anything.