I want to begin by thanking the Senate leadership for this opportunity to speak about the state of the campus two and a half years after I took this position. Even more, I am grateful for the advice and collaboration I have received from this body.

Let me state at the outset that I am an optimist: My cup is half full, not half empty.

- UMass Amherst is clearly a campus on the move. In the areas most important to repaying the Commonwealth’s — and our students’ — investment, our campus stands out in terms of accomplishment and momentum:
  - We are ranked 30th among national public universities by U.S. News and World Report. Over the past ten years, UMass Amherst has moved up farther and faster than any other leading public university, one of only eight public universities with a double-digit improvement in ranking. While we keep an eye on such rankings, I don’t want them to become an obsession – an end unto itself.
  - Over that period, we ranked 4th nationally in improvement in admissions selectivity and 10th in graduation rate improvement. We are also ranked ninth in the nation in graduation rate performance, the number U.S. News and World Report uses to measure how well students do given their entering profiles.
  - These striking improvements have come through effective and efficient use of resources. U.S. News and World Report just named UMass Amherst as one of the twenty-five “most efficient” national public universities in America. This ranking recognizes those campuses that placed high in the quality rankings despite limited financial resources.
  - At the same time, the campus has made steady progress in improving its research profile, moving from thirty-second to twenty-seventh in Research and Development (R&D) expenditures among peers without medical schools, and exceeding the national growth rate in National Science Foundation (NSF) expenditures in six out of the past seven years. In 2014, for the first time, the campus' total R&D expenditures exceeded 200 million dollars.
  - Once again among Massachusetts universities, UMass Amherst was the third largest recipient of research funding from the National Science Foundation. Only MIT and Harvard received more funding than this campus.
  - This past year, national and international faculty awards rose to 337, exceeding our targets.
UMass Rising, the most significant fundraising campaign in our history, formally kicked off in April 2013 as part of our Sesquicentennial celebration. To date, UMass Rising has achieved more than ninety-four percent of its three-hundred million dollar goal.

- The recent progress of this campus has occurred at a time of turmoil in higher education. I arrived in the throes of the economic downturn, in the midst of national debate over the value of going to traditional college, and confronting long-term constriction in the availability of federal research funding. There was every reason for campuses like ours to falter, and many did. But working together, the community here outperformed expectations across the board.

- A campus, like any organization, heavily depends on human resources, thrives when its constituents feel positive and have confidence in its leadership. So, from the very beginning, I saw my “Job #1” as restoring relationships and trust between campus administration and campus constituencies, system administration, the Board of Trustees, local legislators, alumni, town government and leaders, the Office of the Governor, and the business community. I believe the evidence shows I succeeded in this important, fundamental task.

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

- Over the past three years, undergraduate applications rose more than fifteen percent to approximately 40,000 for an entering class of 4,700. Concurrently, the academic profile of each first year class has also continued to climb. This past fall, we welcomed the most academically accomplished entering class in our 151-year history, with average SAT scores rising by 10 points and high school grade-point average increasing from 3.73 to 3.78.

- In 2014, a campus record was set with 14 Fulbright Scholars. We also boast numerous other recent student national scholarships, including a Churchill Scholarship recipient, a Soros Fellowship, nine National Science Foundation fellowships, three Goldwater Scholarships and seven Gilman International Scholarships.

- While we are gratified the campus is increasingly a destination of choice for the best and the brightest, I am also very cognizant of our responsibility to ensure access to all deserving students. To ensure UMass Amherst continues its emphasis on access, I involved all campus constituencies in developing strategies to increase recruitment and graduation of underrepresented minorities, first-generation, low income, and international undergraduate students as part of our first comprehensive diversity strategic plan.

- Over the past two years, we have made a concentrated effort to improve undergraduate retention and graduation rates, including closing the gap between underrepresented minority retention and graduation rates. Having improved our overall first-year retention rates over the past few years (4yr – 66%, 6yr – 76%), we are concentrating on sophomore success and moving this cohort through to a timely four-year graduation.
In 2014, we were recognized as one of the best campuses in the country for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students by Campus Pride, a support and advocacy organization for LGBT college students. The campus is one of only fifty-six colleges and universities that earned a five-star rating in the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index.

We are also proud to be named in Military Advanced Education as a “Top Military-Friendly University,” and to have been repeatedly lauded by GI Jobs Magazine and Military Times EDGE.

Graduate Education

The strength of any research university is in large part defined by its graduate education and we have recently implemented a series of steps to strengthen programs:

- Doubling our investment in graduate student fellowships, with continued emphasis on increasing participation of members of underrepresented minority groups in graduate education.
- Creation of an Office of Professional Development (OPD) in the Graduate School, charged with developing five core competencies critical to success before and after graduation: teaching; writing and presenting; applying for fellowships and grants; career exploration; and leadership and management. In the fall 2014 semester alone, OPD events attracted 1300 graduate student participants.
- With the support of President’s Enhancement Funding, a Business Foundations Course prepares STEM doctoral students for leadership roles in industrial science and engineering careers.
- Also with President's Enhancement Funding, establishing a program of research grants in which graduate students are the linchpin of a new campus-industry collaborative relationship.

Sustainability

The Princeton Review has lauded our campus as a 2015 “Green Honor Roll School,” placing it among the nation’s top twenty-four colleges for environmental awareness and responsibility. We now offer 25 sustainability-related undergraduate majors and more than 300 courses include some sustainability emphasis.

We are now ranked among the top universities worldwide for our commitment to innovation and leadership in sustainability. The campus holds a gold rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s Sustainability Tracking Assessment Rating System (STARS). Only seventy-two universities share this distinction.

We received the prestigious 2014 Climate Leadership Award by Second Nature, a national nonprofit organization. The award, available only to participants in the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, recognizes innovative leadership in education for sustainability and climate mitigation and adaptation.
Recruiting and Retaining a World-Class Faculty

- Our tenure stream instructional faculty has continued to grow: for the first time since 2001, we have now surpassed the one thousand mark in tenure stream instructional faculty members. Concurrently, we are working to improve gender balance and diversity as we build a world-class faculty across all disciplines.

- To recruit and retain the very best faculty, we continue our efforts to increase average salaries at every rank through close attention to market rates for incoming faculty and the award of highly selective exceptional merit increases to distinguished continuing faculty.

- UMass Amherst ranks among the top two hundred programs worldwide in seventeen academic disciplines, according to the 2014 QS World University Subject Rankings:
  
  For a second straight year, our linguistics department is ranked eighth in the world.

  The university ranks eleventh in agriculture and forestry, reflecting the campus’ strengths in resource economics, environmental conservation, food science, and veterinary and animal sciences.

  The rankings moved us into the top one-hundred universities for chemistry, chemical engineering and materials science.


Maintaining a Competitive Infrastructure

- We have had much success in the effort to revitalize our facilities with the opening of significant new buildings such as the Life Science Laboratories and the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Complex (CHCRC). The momentum continues. In just the past year, we opened:

  The Integrative Learning Center: This ninety-three million dollar, four-story academic building provides two thousand seats of new classroom space as well as facilities for several academic departments including communications, journalism, linguistics and film studies. The building features digital, team-based learning classrooms as well as studios and specialized rooms for TV broadcasting and production, editing rooms, film screening rooms, computer classrooms, speech perception and auditory phonetics labs.
Renovated Paige Laboratory: This 9.9 million dollar project converted the 26,500-square-foot, four-story office and research laboratory building into a modern, energy-efficient, ADA-compliant facility for the Stockbridge School of Agriculture.

Three more critical projects — the replacement for Bartlett Hall, forming an addition to historic South College; a new home for our architecture and design programs; and a new state-funded Physical Sciences Building — are about to enter the construction stage.

Looking Towards the Future:

Developing an Ongoing Culture of Planning and Strategic Decision Making

I am a firm believer in working in a culture of planning, assessment, and intentional improvement. The growing demand for accountability in higher education may require that direction, but for me it is a way of life regardless of whether it is mandated. Given rapid changes in the higher education terrain, it is a necessity.

Like most of its peers, UMass Amherst’s approach to planning was neither rigorous nor ground-up when I arrived. My task was made easier by a mandate from NEASC that our Five Year Report, due August 2013, should include a strategic plan whose preparation engaged the campus community broadly. Accordingly, in full partnership with the Faculty Senate, I charged the Joint Task Force for Strategic Oversight (JTFSO) with overseeing such a planning process. The Phase I Report (http://www.umass.edu/chancellor/sites/default/files/strategic-planning/JTFSO-Phase-I-Report.pdf), summarized the rich conversations about the changes facing academe in general, and our campus in particular, which led to the establishment of three overarching goals underscoring our status as a Land Grant institution, and as flagship of a state system.

NEASC, in its response to our Five Year Report, noted with approval, “The University’s success in collaboratively establishing its new strategic plan…a coherent approach to achieving the institution’s long-range goals.” Indeed, the Faculty Senate, in endorsing the Phase I Planning Report, praised “…the first strategic planning process in the institution’s history that was genuinely collaborative among faculty, students, and administration.” This process is now being undertaken at the level of colleges, departments, and support units. After this first cycle, the planning-assessment-improvement cycle will become a routine part of campus administration.

Of course, planning by itself cannot lead to improvements if resource allocation does not follow strategic priorities. I therefore simultaneously launched a reexamination of the campus budgeting processes. A Joint Task Force for Resource Allocation — again, reflecting a true partnership among faculty, students and administration — has worked for almost a year to propose a more transparent, decentralized, data-driven, and incentive-based budgeting model which preserves campus core values. This model is currently in the final stages of development for a trial run.

Other related initiatives pertain to changing the view of Information Technology (IT) as a service or utility into a strategic partner in innovation for all sectors of the campus. I hired the first full-time CIO for the campus, who is systematically implementing this change, working closely with the
system office to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The first steps in increasing our investment in IT have been taken, such as improving bandwidth and installing Echo 360.

Our academic departments and colleges have long had a periodic AQUAD (Academic Quality Assessment and Development) process in place. I have implemented a corresponding periodic review process for administrative units as well. For instance, this has led to considerable reorganization within Student Affairs and Campus Life to improve and streamline services to our students. And, our Office of Grants and Contracts Administration now routinely collects customer satisfaction data and presents it on its website. We also have undertaken an external review of our Human Resources operations and are working to improve its customer service.

Finally, I appointed a Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee which is in the process of creating, with broad participation from the campus community, a plan of action to rededicate our commitment to inclusive excellence.

All in all, while there is still much left to do, we are moving systematically to an organization defined by planning, assessment, improvement, and accountability.

As you know the state is facing a budget deficit, which may affect our campus. We don’t know what if any cuts there will be in our budget but I can assure you that we are building close relationships with the new Baker administration so that they understand the value of the flagship.

We've already had the Governor-elect on campus and are setting up a series of meetings with his cabinet. Those new relationships, along with our close relationship to Stan Rosenberg the Senate President, and Speaker Deleo are of great value to our campus.

Within the system, we look forward to working with our new chairman, Victor Woolridge. Chairman Woolridge is an alumnus of this campus and native of Springfield.

And as we begin the selection process for a new president of the university, I am confident our flagship campus is in such a strong position, we will thrive under a new president.

**Conclusion**

When I arrived I found a campus with a proud heritage and even greater potential, but poorly prepared for the changes coming to it. My first priorities were therefore to build community around common purposes and put in place the systems and structures needed for successful competition. This, I believe, has been substantially accomplished, and in a span of time many would have thought impossible. My next challenge — and the focus of my future evaluations — is to build on that foundation and maintain the extraordinary momentum now clearly emerging on the campus. UMass Amherst is a special place, but more important, it is a place ready to be recognized as a leader in the next generation of American higher education. It is my hope that my accomplishments so far have produced confidence in what is still to come.