Legislative Update:

Over the past two months, I successfully implemented the iClicker system for the purpose of counting votes in Senate meetings. This system will be used to increase accountability and transparency of voting members of the SGA on legislation that effects their constituents. We will be regularly posting this data to our SGA website. I also have been working with Harry Rockland Miller from CCPH and our Undergraduate Experience Committee to create a Student Mental Health and Wellness Board. We are planning how to most effectively use this board to outreach to students about mental health awareness and utilization of CCPH services. I will be reaching out to multiple groups and organizations on campus and hope to have this board up and running by the beginning of next semester. Other highlights of November/December include the Women’s Leadership Conference, the culmination of the UMPD Police Chief Search, and the meeting of the Community Police Advisory Board.

This month, the Undergraduate Senate welcomed two new members: Mahin Jalalkhan and Nicholas Goetz. There are two At-Large Senate seats, one Commuter district seat, and one North district seat open for next semester. If you are interested in joining the Student Government Association, please e-mail Chairwoman Amy Gebo at sgaadminaffairs@umass.edu to set up an interview. I would also like to congratulate Mark Hochberg on his appointment as the Chairman of the Undergraduate Experience Committee and Chairman of the Finance Committee, Michael Turner, on his graduation. Over the past month, the Senate has passed motions to update Title I, IV, and VIII of our By-Laws and amend our Senate Attendance Policy to hold our members more accountable. We have also updated various job descriptions in the Executive Branch, drafted a letter to Governor Baker in response to his comments on Syrian Refugees, appointed three new members to our Elections Commission, and looked at the proposed new guest policy for residence halls.
The Administrative Affairs committee has updated half of SGA’s By-laws as the end of fall semester. The biggest change thus far is how elections work; we decided on these changes with suggestions from the Elections Commissioners. Elections will now all be held in the spring except for those based in the residential areas (RHA/House Council and Area Government) and freshmen perspective senators. The Senate elections will now be based on graduation year rather than area, and will be held in the spring, at the same time as President/Vice President and Trustee elections.

This semester, the Social Justice and Empowerment Committee has organized representatives for groups such as the Native American Student Organization, International Program Organization, and Gender Liberation Union. We are starting to break down and analyze the Diversity Strategic Plan so we can better advocate for its goals. Representatives from our committee have been attending various campus listening sessions on diversity issues, as well. Our next big task is planning for Lobby Day – we’re planning well ahead as to secure the best possible student turnout!

Fall of 2015 was the Outreach and Development Committee’s first semester as an official committee of Senate. ODC is responsible for building transparency and cooperation within Senate and amongst the other branches of the Student Government Association. It is the responsibility of the committee to create professionalism workshops and assure that the Student Government Association holds itself to a professional standard. The Outreach and Development Committee also promotes positive public relations and outreaches to the student body.

One project ODC completed this semester was a motion passed though Senate that established standards of professionalism. This created a precedent of consultation and communication in order for the Student Government Association to effectively work together. Another project was a description of what each position on leadership does in order for members to be aware of whom to contact regarding projects and interactions with other positions. Next semester the Outreach and Development Committee plans on facilitating more professional development workshops and to improve voter turnout in elections in the spring.

The Undergraduate Experience Committee has worked hard this semester to help better advocate for the student body and improve the experience for all members of the University community. With a recent change in leadership, we have settled on two main initiatives we would like to undertake: sustainability and mental illness. We are also helping with the process for high-risk event planning for this upcoming semester. One thing we are really proud to be working on is the creation of a new Wellness Advisory Board, to better communication between the many facets of the University relating to student wellness. Another specific task we accomplished was an open letter to Governor Baker. After polling the undergraduate student body, we found that the vast majority of the students opposed the Governor’s stance on Syrian refugees, so we decided to do something about it! We look forward to a successful and productive second semester.
Executive Update:

Myself, Vice President Lima Barbosa, and the Secretary of Diversity Nunnalley- Rivera are working with other SGA members to include education and conversations on intersectional components of social justice into all mandatory freshmen seminars for next fall. We presented our ideas on what should be included to the Provosts and all of the Deans on December 8th.

In addition, myself and Vice President Lima Barbosa met with Chancellor Subbaswamy on November 25th to finalize the Consultation Protocol which will ensure student feedback prior to any policy or fee change. The final draft has been approved by legal teams, and we will be sending it out to the student body once formally signed by all parties.

Greetings!

I hope you all have picked your classes for next semester, and you are now preparing to end this semester strong! Remember to practice self-care and study hard!

In addition to By-law updates to many executive positions, I attended the Community Listening event with other SGA members. During this event we listened to the UMass community about their concerns about continuous racist altercations that students and staff of color continue to experience on this campus. Myself and President Barrett addressed our concerns about Provost Newman not being present at this event, given that many of the racist altercations are happening in classrooms, between students and faculty.

On December 6th myself, President Barrett, and Speaker Coakley hosted the SGA Leadership Team retreat and evaluated the team with the goal to improve collaboration between the Legislative and the Executive branches.

Good luck on finals, and happy winter break!
I was thrilled to see the successful culmination of months of hard work at the Women’s Leadership Conference on Sunday, November 16th. We were thrilled with the turnout, and the day provided important introductions and dialogues for the women in attendance. We’re thankful to all who attended or were involved, and are looking forward to building upon this in the coming years. I’m also proud to have organized another successful SGA event, the LinkedIn Headshot event on December 2nd. We successfully photographed about 250 students, and are planning on an even larger event in the spring! I’d like to extend my thanks to my undersecretaries, Cassidy Kotyla and Gabe Benson, for their crucial roles in, respectively, planning and photographing the event! I also created a new logo for the SGA this semester – we think the new logo is more professional & recognizable, and overall, more representative of our group. I’m looking forward to a successful & productive second semester!

I have been working in collaboration with my colleagues President Barrett, Secretary Tate, and Secretary Vitale, in the organization to launch a new iPad kiosk initiative to improve SGA outreach. These will be utilized in particular for conducting surveys regarding campus issues, and elections in the Spring. Another project that will be seen out next semester is a new menu structure is also being created for the website. Additionally, a new section of the website for SGA projects is being created, giving updates of how the organization is working for students. This will be live soon.

Bikeshare program is officially closed for winter. Elizabeth and I will be putting together a bike share report reviewing the program beginning next semester. As a participant in the Green Office Program, the SGA Office received a walkthrough and received a ranking of Gold. In an effort to move up to Green, the SGA will be purchasing a compost bin that will be located in our office and switching to Treefrog brand paper. Any office on campus can participate in the Green Office Program and I highly encourage any student group that has an office to participate. In conjunction with Sustainable UMass and Secretary Andrade, I will be working on a customized version to especially pertain to student group offices and RSOs in general. The Sustainability Steering Committee saw the remainder of SIEF applications, and allocated a total of $6,800 this semester, including a supplement to the University Event’s budget to allow them to purchase recycled gowns for graduates at the 2016 commencement. More info on SIEF projects and applications for funding can be found on the Sustainable UMass website. The EPA Gameday Challenge finished on Nov. 21st during the final home football game for the minutemen. Over 3 games we diverted more than 16,510 lbs. of waste material for a rate of 36.5%. A huge thank you to all of the volunteers that helped us, we could not have done it without you!