

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### **History of the Task Force:**

During the spring of 1999, The University of Massachusetts, Amherst altered its undergraduate admissions practices to de-emphasize race as a factor in determining admission to the university. This was because the university administration had been informed that continued use of the previous policy would be legally challengeable and that the university would be leaving itself vulnerable to a lawsuit.

To resolve this dilemma, Chancellor David K. Scott created the Task Force on Undergraduate Admissions<sup>1</sup>, which includes faculty, administrators, and students, to research the current admissions practices at this and other campuses and to come up with innovative ways of admitting a diverse student body while maintaining a commitment to academic excellence and remaining within the limits of the law.

In order to remain within the new interpretation of the law, and in particular the *Bakke* case, and still admit a diverse freshman class, the Admissions Office has made extra efforts in the areas of outreach, recruitment and yield enhancement for ALANA (African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and Native American) students. The university also accepted a larger overall freshman class. Despite these efforts, the entering class for Fall 1999 has significantly fewer ALANA students than previous classes. The Chancellor charged the Task Force with finding new ways of ensuring a diverse student body, without having to increase the total number of students admitted each year, as this will eventually overcrowd the university.

The Task Force on Admissions convened on May 4, 1999, and was given a charge by the Chancellor to review and make recommendations on a number of admissions-related issues for the undergraduate student body and report the findings by November 1, 1999. Subsequent discussions resulted in many questions from the Task Force members that required further delineation of the charge and clarification by the Administration.

The original charge was very broad, but members of the Task Force began to approach the myriad questions by obtaining data on this campus and from others. Within the first month, it became apparent to the Task Force membership that many of the systemically related questions, answers, and issues, could not be adequately addressed by November 1. Student members of the Task Force engaged in a detailed delineation of the charge, which was presented to the entire Task Force and then to the Administration. The enormous scope of the problem and the desire to present a thorough, fully developed report created some problems for the November deadline.

As a result, in July, the Chancellor further refined three key questions, and asked that the Task Force respond to these questions by the second week of September 1999. The Task Force membership fully realized that further committees, subcommittees, and task forces may well be necessary after the original Task Force issues its report in September, to continue work on these critical issues for our campus.

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<sup>1</sup> See Attachment 1 for a list of Task Force members

Through research, it was determined that many other institutions that have been grappling with the same problems have had the time to do more exhaustive reviews in developing programs for admission and retention of students. For example, the University of California worked for 16 months to develop their recommendations, while the UMass Task Force has had only 4 months. As a result, the efforts of other institutions have been reviewed and carefully considered with regard to their applicability at UMass.

Efforts have been made to include alternative visions and views of the admissions problem at UMass, but the Task Force membership acknowledges the difficulty of completing this review during summer months when key personnel and others with vested interests in the outcome have not been available to review these recommendations. As a result, the membership of the Task Force strongly encourage the administration, the Trustees, and interested parties on campus to continue these dialogues, and devote energy to these issues that impact the campus, community, and Commonwealth.

This report addresses the following three key questions posed by the Chancellor's revised charge:

1. Consult on revised admissions practices for the 1999-2000 cycle. It was necessary to make changes to the campus's admissions practices last year virtually mid-process. This interim approach was effective within the limits set for it, but review and modification is needed so as to build on what has been achieved. The Enrollment Management working group is developing a framework for the upcoming cycle. The Task Force will be asked to review and comment on the new practices while they are still in the formative stages.
2. Research and review diversity strategies at other institutions. Many institutions are struggling with the same issues confronting UMass Amherst, and we need to look for ideas that can be incorporated into our strategy. It is particularly important to examine approaches to outreach (developing the student "pipeline") and recruitment (attracting interest in UMass).
3. Review and refine yield enhancement strategies. We began a series of new yield enhancement efforts for ALANA students during the last admissions cycle. The Task Force will conduct a review of these efforts, and suggest improvements and enhancements for the upcoming cycle.

After reviewing these questions, the Task Force created a sub-committee on admissions to address question 1. The Task Force found questions 2 and 3 to be very similar in nature, and another sub-committee was established to address the issues of outreach, yield, and retention. This report reflects the results of the research efforts of each of the two sub-committees and extensive discussion within the entire Task Force.

The Task Force made every effort to ensure that the recommendations in this document reflect the concerns and opinions of those who will be directly involved in implementing these changes as well as the UMass community at large.

While the Task Force was researching and discussing possibilities, several individuals and offices from this and other campuses were consulted for ideas and advice<sup>2</sup>. Many individuals who had been involved in recruiting, admissions, and retention strategies in the past were consulted for advice on what should be done in the future. Both the administration and the current staff in the Admissions Office were consulted in this manner, as well as being given preliminary drafts of this document and an opportunity to provide the Task Force with constructive feedback. An earlier draft of this document was also presented at a community forum that was open to the UMass community and the public. Consequently, the Task Force was made aware of many of the community's questions and suggestions concerning these recommendations.

This report has taken into consideration the ideas, suggestions, and concerns of everyone consulted as well as those present at the community forum. This document now reflects not only the intentions of the members of the Task Force, but also many of the concerns of the UMass administration, admissions staff, and larger community.

The Task Force realizes that many of the recommendations in this document will be costly to implement. Concerning this issue, we have the following two recommendations. First, that a consultant be hired to do a cost-benefit analysis of the recommendations and outline the different possibilities for implementation. Second, that the university explore all available avenues of funding, while not relying too heavily on federal and private grants. The use of internal funding will illustrate the university's commitment to the issue at hand and will prevent the discontinuation of successful programs if grant funding is withdrawn.

While these recommendations are separated into the categories of admissions, yield, and retention, many speak to more than one of these issues. The Task Force also realizes that, while these recommendations are broken down into short and long term, it needs to be further specified when each recommendation needs to take effect. The Task Force hopes to work with the campus administration in determining which programs can feasibly be implemented each year for the next few years.

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<sup>2</sup> See Attachment 2 for a list of individuals and offices consulted

## MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY:

The University of Massachusetts, Amherst is committed to achieving an increasingly diverse student body. The Task Force on Undergraduate Admissions has kept this goal in mind when formulating recommendations for changes in the admissions process. Below is the Mission Statement of the Amherst campus.

### *Campus Vision Statement (Trustee Document T92-117B)*

As the system's flagship campus, Amherst draws from throughout the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world, providing a broad undergraduate curriculum with over 100 majors, and more than 50 doctoral programs. It will continue as a Carnegie Research I university and will continue its efforts to achieve a median ranking among the American Association of Research Libraries; to obtain membership in the Association of American Universities; and to maintain a leading presence in a variety of Division I intercollegiate sports.

The mission of the Amherst campus reflects the University's missions in the following ways:

- **Access.** Providing undergraduate education for all qualified students, regardless of their financial circumstances, in a broad range of areas found in leading public research I universities, as well as in graduate programs leading to doctoral or other appropriate terminal degrees in most of those fields. Paying special attention to meeting the needs of students from varied social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.
- **Excellence.** Maintaining a range of academic offerings comparable in quality to those offered at AAU universities; maintaining national leadership in such areas as creative writing, computer science, engineering, polymer science, linguistics, astronomy, sports management, and hotel management; and striving for national leadership in other academic areas.
- **Innovation.** Creating new knowledge with a broad program of distinctive research; adding new emphasis on advanced interdisciplinary programs such as material science and evolutionary and organismic biology, and with added emphasis on areas of economic importance; and disseminating this knowledge through publications, public presentations, and professional conferences.
- **Economic Development and Global Competitiveness.** Supporting the economic development of the Commonwealth by providing assistance to small business and industry; encouraging technology transfer; undertaking research in areas of economic importance; and providing the language instruction and other tools necessary for participation in the global economy.

- **Public Service.** Providing public service by meeting formal land-grant responsibilities; serving agriculture; offering assistance to regional cities and towns; and engaging in research and outreach in such areas as public health, environmental safety, transportation, public finance, and education.
- **Quality of Life.** Developing the human and cultural quality of life for the region through a comprehensive arts program; assisting public social agencies to provide improved services to the citizens of the Commonwealth; and promoting the multicultural awareness and support and appreciation of, and respect for diversity essential to a pluralistic, transnational society.

The Task Force believes that the recommendations in the following document reflect and support the mission of the University and, specifically, the Amherst campus. In particular, implementation of the Task Force recommendations in the admissions process will help the university in achieving its goals of Access and Quality of Life.

## ADMISSIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction:**

After researching the current admissions process here at UMass, as well as practices at other institutions, the Task Force has created both short-term and long-term modifications to the current admissions system that will aid the university in achieving its goal of reflecting the diverse population of Massachusetts high schools. The recommendations below are made with the intent of identifying previously overlooked talent and predictors of success in applicants of whatever race, gender, or socioeconomic background. If these factors are not only identified, but also taken into consideration during the admissions process, the result will be a more diverse campus community, which will benefit all at the university.

For this upcoming cycle, the Task Force is constrained by two main factors: 1) the current amount of full-time admissions staff and 2) the current application for admission. Because of these constraints, the short-term plan is less elaborate than what the Task Force would have liked. Fortunately, this is intended only as a transitional plan, to be replaced after one cycle by the recommended long-term plan.

**Note:** *All* of the recommendations in this document are tentative and subject to change pending the results of further research and testing.

### **Short-Term:**

To be implemented for the current admissions cycle (for evaluation of the class entering in the fall of 2000)

We propose that the current Admissions Rating (AR) system is eliminated and that the following eight recommendations are put into place in its stead.

1. Automatically admitting all applicants in the top 10% of every public high school in the state, assuming they meet the Board of Higher Education (BHE) minimum requirements
2. Using the proposed "Three Point Plan" as an alternative way to evaluate an applicant's potential
3. Hiring additional seasonal staff or student interns during the admissions cycle to ease the workload of the admissions counselors
4. Filling the position of Associate Director for ALANA Admissions
5. Bringing in both an outside consultant and members of the Task Force to observe and work with the Admissions Office to facilitate the implementation of these changes

6. Requiring diversity training for all admissions staff members
7. Obtaining Enrollment Planning Services (EPS) to facilitate the use of the Three Point Plan and the long-term Point System
8. Allowing the Task Force, as an entity, to continue to meet, work with admissions, oversee the implementation of these recommendations, and make new recommendations for a minimum of three admissions cycles (until fall 2002)

### **1. Top Ten Percent:**

We recommend that any applicant to UMass (who meets the Board of Higher Education minimum GPA and SAT requirements and who has completed the sixteen core required courses) in the top 10% of their graduating class at a Massachusetts public high school be automatically admitted to the university.

This program would contextualize an individual student's success and ensure an increase in the number of ALANA students admitted to the university without giving preferential treatment based on race. Due to the fact that many Massachusetts public high schools are racially segregated, accepting the top 10% of each school would ensure the acceptance of a large number of ALANA students. Yet this policy is not only benefiting ALANA students; *all* students in the top 10% of their classes would be automatically admitted. At the same time, academic standards would be preserved because this system focuses on academically successful students.

This will also function as a time saving mechanism. Since there is a limited number of admissions counselors for the current cycle and the Three Point Plan is going to require additional time spent with each application, automatically admitting applicants in the top 10% of their high school class is intended to decrease the number of applicants being evaluated with the Three Point Plan.

While it is true that under the current system almost all students who are in the top 10% of their class and apply to UMass are accepted, this program would encourage more students in the top 10% of their class to apply. Some students may have excellent GPA's and be top in their class, but do not apply because of low SAT scores. These students are obviously academically successful and guaranteeing them admission would encourage them to apply and, in turn, attend UMass.

This very same system has been implemented in the state of Texas and has worked well to increase the percentage of the state's substantial Latino and African-American population that goes on to college to almost pre-*Hopwood* status. A similar system is about to be implemented in California in which all state universities are admitting the top 4% of their high school students. This is expected to increase California's applicant pool by approximately 3,600.

Texas has experienced some problems with this system, but it is not likely UMass will have the same trouble. Texas has 18,000 high school seniors in the top 10% of their class, and only 6,000 spots in the University, and an increased yield has caused overcrowding. Massachusetts, however, has approximately 6,000 seniors in the top 10% for 3,500 spots at UMass Amherst. Since UMass usually accepts around 13,000 applicants, the 6,000 in the top 10% will constitute less than half of all acceptances.

It has been established that, before this practice is instituted, each high school in the Commonwealth be contacted and surveyed about the racial composition of its top ten percent<sup>3</sup>.

**2. Three Point Plan:**

We recommend a new system for evaluating applications that will replace the Admissions Rating (AR) system that is currently in place. It will be a two-step process involving qualification and evaluation.

*Step 1: Qualification*

First, applicants need to qualify for consideration based on their GPA and SAT scores. Using the BHE sliding scale, students with a 3.0 GPA will automatically qualify for consideration and students with below a 3.0 GPA will need sufficient SAT scores to be considered for admission to the university. Once the pool of applicants to be considered has been determined, the evaluation begins.

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education sliding scale of SAT requirements for entrance to UMass Amherst is below:

High School GPA:	Combined SAT Score Must Equal or Exceed:	
	Fall 2000	Fall 2001
2.51-2.99	940	950
2.41-2.50	980	990
2.31-2.40	1020	1030
2.21-2.30	1060	1070
2.11-2.20	1100	1110
2.00-2.10	1140	1150

<sup>3</sup> See Attachment 3 for proposed survey

## *Step 2: Evaluation*

The actual evaluation is based on a three point system. The three points are:

1. GPA
2. Diversity
3. Achievement and Merit

Each applicant receives an initial score of his or her weighted GPA on a five-point scale. From there, an applicant may or may not receive extra points for Diversity or Achievement and Merit. The applicant's final score will determine acceptance into the university.

Specific numbers of how many points each item is worth will not be determined until after some preliminary testing of the Three Point Plan has been done.

In general, the GPA will constitute approximately one half of the total score. The other half will be a combination of diversity and achievement and merit points, which may or may not be weighted equally.

### *Definitions:*

**GPA:** This is defined as an applicant's high school GPA, excluding non-academic classes such as physical education, and adjusted to give more weight to honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The final GPA is based on a five-point scale. We are recommending the use of a weighted GPA because the Board of Higher Education currently requires it, but we do not stand by the use of this mechanism in the long term, as it systematically disadvantages students from poorer schools who do not have the opportunity to take honors or AP courses.

**Diversity:** In order to assess whether a student will contribute to the diversity of the campus community, several factors will be considered. If "yes" can be answered to any one of the following questions concerning an applicant, that applicant will receive diversity points.

- Is the applicant a member of an underrepresented minority group?  
*Defined as anyone of African-American, Latino, Asian-American, or Native American heritage*
- Did the applicant (of whatever race) attend a high school that was predominantly attended by members of minority groups?  
*Defined as any high school with an ALANA population of 50% or higher*
- Did the applicant (of whatever race and socioeconomic status) attend a high school predominantly attended by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?  
*Defined as any high school with an average family income at or below the poverty level*

- Has the applicant worked as an advocate of or volunteered to promote diversity?  
*This will have to be gleaned from the applicant's essay and/or list of activities and experiences*
- Does the applicant understand, and know how to deal with, racism?  
*This will also be taken from the applicant's essay*
- Is the applicant an international student?  
*Defined as a non-resident alien*
- Is the applicant one of the following: a non-traditional student, a veteran, disabled, bilingual, or an ESL (English as a Second Language) student?  
*Defined as students not entering college directly out of high school, as veterans of the US military, as those with a disability, as those who are fluent in two or more languages, and as those for whom English is a second language.*

This will ensure that more students who can contribute to the diversity of the campus in any of a number of ways are accepted to UMass in an attempt to meet the goals of becoming a more global community and reflecting the racial composition of the Commonwealth.

**Achievement and Merit:** The most subjective of the three points, achievement and merit information will be taken primarily from the essays, but also from activity lists, resumes/work experience lists, and letters of recommendation. Achievement is defined as any exceptional academic success. Merit is defined as exceptional non-academic experiences or qualities. Below are some examples.

Achievement:

- Receiving an award for academic success
- Exceptional SAT scores (above 1300)
- Improvement trend in grades over high school career

Merit:

- Participating in or receiving an award for other activities (music, athletics, community service, etc.)
- Participating in METCO, Upward Bound, or a similar program
- Holding a job during the school year
- Demonstrating exceptional leadership skills
- Overcoming a particular economic, social, or personal adversity

*Relative Weight:*

**GPA:** The applicant's GPA will constitute approximately one half of the total score. This is intended to preserve UMass' commitment to academic excellence. Since GPA has been proven to be a more accurate predictor of academic success than SAT scores, it is

used here as the basis for the final score. This ensures that students who fail to demonstrate academic merit will not gain entry into the university.

**Diversity:** Diversity will most likely constitute somewhere between one eighth and one quarter of the total score. This is intended to benefit both those students who can contribute to making UMass a more global community and the university as a whole.

**Achievement and Merit:** Achievement and Merit will constitute somewhere between one eighth and one third of the total score. Since both academic and non-academic achievements are valid predictors of success at the university, this category may be weighted more heavily than Diversity. This is intended to benefit those students who may not have an outstanding GPA, but who have excelled in other ways. This will increase the amount of well-rounded students with diverse experiences attending UMass.

**Note:** Before implementing the Three Point Plan, archived applications will be evaluated under this new system to examine how it will affect admissions in the future. Perhaps the retention rates of the current admissions system will be compared to the retention rates of the Three Point Plan. After this research has been conducted, exact quantities of points for each category will be determined in such a way as to promote academic excellence while increasing the diversity of the Amherst campus.

### **3. Seasonal Staff:**

Because the Three Point Plan does not allow students to be admitted to the university solely on the basis of their GPA and SAT's, each application must be read more thoroughly than in the past and this will create more work for the admissions counselors. To remedy this, we propose that either seasonal staff or student interns be hired to assist with the labor-intensive tasks that do not require extensive training. For example, opening and sorting the applications as they arrive in the mail, calculating weighted GPA's, stuffing envelopes for mailing, and organizing materials for counselors who are going out to recruit. This would allow admissions counselors more time to dedicate to reading and evaluating applications.

### **4. Associate Director for ALANA Admissions:**

We recommend that the search to fill the position of Associate Director for ALANA Admissions begin immediately. The presence of this position in the Admissions Office is integral to the office's ability to recruit, admit, and yield a diverse student body.

This person's duties should be restricted to the admissions aspect of the process, including the coordination of recruitment efforts.<sup>4</sup> Other Admissions staff should be hired or assigned to assist this person in all aspects of their work.

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<sup>4</sup> See Attachment 4 for job description

This person should also work closely with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity (see short-term yield enhancement recommendation #9), who will be focusing on recruitment and retention issues.

### **5. Transitioning:**

An outside consultant with an expertise in admissions should be brought in to examine the workings of the Admissions Office and aid in the transition from the old practices to the new. In addition, members of the Task Force should be observing and working in the Admissions Office. This will allow the Task Force to build a relationship with admissions staff and to gain an intimate knowledge of the workings of the office, which will aid the Task Force in recommending future changes.

### **6. Diversity Training:**

We recommend that all admissions staff participate in extensive, multi-day diversity training workshops in order to increase their awareness of ALANA and low-income issues. This knowledge is essential when evaluating applications from students in these categories. We propose diversity training that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the Admissions Office.

### **7. Enrollment Planning Services:**

In order to utilize the Three Point Plan to its fullest potential, certain data must be obtained concerning the socioeconomic status and racial composition of Massachusetts high schools. This data can be obtained through the computer program called Enrollment Planning Services (EPS). At one time, the Admissions Office did have this program. We recommend that they once again obtain EPS, to be used in conjunction with the Three Point Plan and, eventually, the long-term point system.<sup>5</sup>

### **8. Continuation of the Task Force:**

This document is a dynamic one, with room for change and improvement. The Task Force will most likely need to make adjustments to these new plans as they are implemented in the Admissions Office. These recommendations also need to be observed over time to examine their effectiveness and make any necessary changes. Therefore, we recommend that the Task Force on Undergraduate Admissions is not disbanded until at least three admissions cycles have been completed (when the class entering in the fall of 2002 has been admitted). During this time, the Task Force will work closely with the Admissions Office to monitor the usefulness and practicality of

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<sup>5</sup> See Attachment 5 for information on EPS

these recommendations and to make any modifications necessary as well as creating innovative recommendations for the future.

Both the Ten Percent Plan and the Three Point Plan will be used as transition admissions policies, while a permanent system is being researched, tested, and eventually implemented. The Ten Percent Plan will be discontinued once an adequate number of admissions counselors are hired to evaluate applications as thoroughly as deemed in the long-term point system. The Three Point Plan will be expanded into a more comprehensive, permanent admissions system.

To prepare for the transition to the long-term point system, a sample of applicants during this coming cycle will be asked further questions over the phone or through the mail. These questions will not affect their admission, but will be questions the Task Force is considering adding to the application in the future. The goal is to discover which factors in an applicant's life are the best predictors of academic success in college. After one year, the Task Force will examine the academic standing (including retention) of the freshman class and determine which factors, specifically which of those asked by phone survey, are the best predictors of academic success. These will then be added to the application for admission and incorporated into the long-term point system. See below.

**Long-Term:**

To be implemented for the admissions cycle that evaluates the class entering in the fall of 2001, and beyond.

We propose seven initial long-term changes, subject to evaluation of the previously outlined short-term recommendations.

1. Modifying the application for admission to include several new questions that will enable the applicants to be evaluated more thoroughly using the expanded point system
2. Requiring the same two essay questions for all applicants
3. Implementing a more elaborate point system after the interim period of one admissions cycle
4. Hiring between nine and eighteen new full-time admissions counselors
5. Facilitating the implementation of these recommendations through the use of an outside consultant and Task Force members working within the Admissions Office
6. Continuing diversity training for admissions staff, on at least an annual basis
7. Examining and reevaluating the transfer admissions process

## **1. Changes in Application:**

In order for applicants to be thoroughly evaluated under the proposed long-term point system, more information must be obtained from the application. We are recommending several additions to the application form. For example, the question concerning socioeconomic status needs to be removed from the research section of the application so that it may be used in the admission process. Additional questions dealing with factors such as overcoming adversity or having leadership experience also need to be added.

We also recommend placing more emphasis on the letters of recommendation by strongly suggesting they be included, rather than labeling them "optional". This will promote the submission of these letters from more applicants, thus increasing the consistency among applications.

The Task Force intends to continue to work with the Admissions Office in developing new questions to be added to the application over the next few months.

## **2. Essays:**

This recommendation would require that all applicants answer the same two essay questions. This will again contribute to the consistency of the applications. Currently, it is difficult to comparatively evaluate applications when different essay questions are answered on each. These essays, which the committee will design, will be specifically structured to extract information from the applicants pertaining to the point system to be instituted in the long-term. (See below)

## **3. The Point System:**

An expansion of the Three Point Plan, The Point System would require admissions counselors to consider several factors during evaluation. Under this system, counselors would carefully read every application and allocate points to an applicant for meeting certain criteria. The applicants with the highest point totals would be admitted to the university.

These factors were arrived at in such a way as to combine academic indexes (GPA, class rank, academic awards, and SAT scores) with non-cognitive predictors of success in college, such as overcoming adversity and contributing to diversity.

A preliminary list of these criteria is below:

*GPA:*

The applicant's high school Grade Point Average.

Use of the applicant's GPA will ensure that those admitted to the University have been academically successful. As previously stated, research has shown that a student's high school GPA is a good indication of their success in college. This ensures that academic merit is the primary consideration for admission to the university.

Since the weighting of GPA's systematically disadvantages applicants who attend high schools that do not offer AP or Honors classes, use of a weighted GPA leaves the university vulnerable to a lawsuit. We recommend that the university challenge the BHE requirement of weighting GPA's.

In place of the weighted GPA, we are recommending that points be given to students who took a high percentage of the AP courses offered at their school (see below under "courses taken")

*SAT/ACT:*

The applicant's SAT or ACT scores

Use of the SAT/ACT will be to the benefit of those with lower GPA's. A high score on the SAT or ACT will help to lessen the effect of a low GPA on the applicant's point total.

While we are initially recommending the continued use of SAT's as a factor for consideration, we would like to state that if other predictors of success can be found to replace SAT scores, the university should do so. SAT's have been found to be less effective in predicting academic success than GPA and have also been found to disadvantage both students of color and low-income students. Continued use of the SAT as a criterion for admission leaves the university vulnerable to a lawsuit from ALANA or low-income applicants.

*Class Rank:*

The applicant's standing among his or her graduating class

Use of class rank rewards those students who are in the top of their class. This will replace the broader, short-term plan of accepting anyone in the top 10% of their class.

*Achievement and Merit:*

The applicant's demonstration of a particular achievement or quality that merits consideration. Below are some examples:

- Receiving an award for academic success
- Participating in or receiving an award for other activities (music, athletics, or community service)
- Participating in METCO, Upward Bound, or a similar program
- Holding a job during the school year

*Courses Taken:*

The nature of the applicant's high school course work, whether challenging courses were taken, considered in relation to what types of courses were offered at the applicant's high school

Use of courses taken benefits students who seek challenges, whether AP classes at a private school or top level classes at a less advantaged school. An applicant could, for example, be evaluated on the number of AP courses they took as a percent of the AP courses offered at their school. This way, the student who took zero where zero were offered is no worse off than the student who took five where five were offered--both took 100% of the AP course offered at their school. This will allow admissions to give extra points to those students who have taken AP and honors courses, without systematically disadvantaging those whose schools do not offer such courses (as the use of a weighted GPA does).

*Socioeconomic Status:*

The applicant's yearly family income

Use of the applicant's socioeconomic status will allow more students who have fewer opportunities due to their low income to gain entry into the university. In order to achieve this, the university's current need-blind admissions policy should be assessed and possibly modified.

*Family Situation:*

An applicant's individual family situation, if it has caused them to demonstrate the ability to overcome an adverse situation or achieve beyond expectation

Below are some examples:

1. Whether the applicant is the first generation in his or her family to attend college
2. Whether the applicant has been placed in foster care or under the care of the Department of Social Services.

Use of family situation benefits applicants who are the first generation to go to college, since this is quite an accomplishment. It also benefits those students who have overcome an adverse living situation such as foster care and succeeded academically despite their situation.

*Diversity:*

The applicant's potential contribution to diversity on campus, defined the same as in the Three Point Plan

Use of diversity ensures that the UMass campus will become an increasingly global community through the acceptance of more ALANA and low-income students, as well as students with distinctive experiences concerning ALANA and low-income issues. Because it includes categories such as international students,

non-traditional students, and disabled students, this category will increase the diversity of the UMass student body in multiple ways.

*Overcoming Adversity:*

The applicant's ability to overcome hardships in his or her life and succeed both personally and academically despite adversities they have faced

Use of overcoming adversity provides applicants a chance to demonstrate that they have been able to work past some circumstances in their life to succeed. This ensures that the UMass student body will include more students who have shown the potential for success through persistence and a strong desire to achieve.

*Leadership Qualities:*

The applicant's experience in and ability to be a leader, demonstrated through previous experiences in a leadership role

Use of leadership qualities will take into consideration those students who have demonstrated leadership skills through past experience as a leader of a student or community group. Students with leadership skills are more likely to be equipped to succeed at, and contribute to the diverse community of, UMass.

*Community Service:*

The applicant's previous experience in community service

Use of community service will allow the consideration of those students who may not be members of minority groups or of low socioeconomic status, but who are committed to bettering their community and working with diverse groups. Admitting students who care about the community around them will make the Amherst campus a more diverse, caring environment.

*Other:*

Any other outstanding quality not previously mentioned that merits consideration.

This category will preserve some of the discretion of the individual admissions counselors, without severely compromising consistency.

**Note:** This list of factors is subject to further research and some factors may be removed from the list while additional factors may be added.

A point system very similar to the one proposed here has been used at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and other campuses and has been very successful in increasing the diversity of the student body at these institutions.

#### **4. Full-Time Staff:**

For this elaborate point system to be effectively implemented, every application will need to be read thoroughly. With the current number of admissions counselors, this will be impossible. Therefore, we recommend that between nine and eighteen new counselors be hired and trained in this new point system. The number of staff required is dependent on how extensive the point system is and how long it takes to evaluate each application with this new process.

The hiring of these new staff members should also take into consideration the new policies and the university's commitment to diversity. Those being hired should demonstrate experience with and commitment to diversity issues. This will ensure an admissions staff willing and able to work with these new recommendations.

As the Admissions Office is currently overcrowded, it will be necessary to make some adjustments in order to find space for these new counselors. One alternative may be to relocate the New Student Program from the third floor of the Admissions Building. Then the admissions staff could use both floors for their offices.

#### **5. Implementation:**

Each of these recommendations will have a pragmatic affect on the way the Admissions Office functions. As with the short-term recommendations, in order to facilitate a smooth transition into these new programs, an outside consultant should be brought in to examine the way the office works and how it can run more efficiently while incorporating these new procedures.

Once again, members of the Task Force should be working in the Admissions Office, both observing and participating in the admissions process. Knowledge gained through this experience will enable Task Force members to make feasible recommendations for the future.

#### **6. Continued Diversity Training:**

There will also be a continuation of the short-term diversity training plan, which will require regular, at least annual, diversity workshops to support the ongoing work of the admissions staff and to keep them up to date on issues surrounding ALANA and low-income communities.

#### **7. Transfer Admissions:**

Transfer students make up approximately one fifth of the entering class each year and the admissions process for these students is different than that for freshmen applicants. In

addition, Massachusetts community colleges have approximately 20% ALANA students, while those transferring to UMass are only about 12% ALANA (Office of Institutional Research).

Unfortunately, the Task Force was unable to examine the transfer admissions process due to time constraints. Yet if this university is going to stand by its mission of diversity, it is essential that transfer admissions are also reassessed with an eye toward increasing all types of diversity, while remaining within the limits of the law. In the future, the transfer admissions process should be reexamined in the same way that this Task Force looked at the general undergraduate admissions process.

### **Conclusion:**

The short-term recommendations will ensure an increase in the diversity of the students admitted to the University of Massachusetts for this coming cycle without having to increase the size of the entire incoming class. The long-term recommendations will increase consistency among applications and make comparative evaluation easier. They will also ensure that those admitted are well-rounded students with diverse experiences and backgrounds. These recommendations will allow for those students with limited academic opportunity, but who have demonstrated a desire to learn, to be admitted to the university. All these new policies will replace the AR system's almost exclusive emphasis on GPA and SAT's with a more comprehensive evaluation system that will expand the pool of qualified applicants without compromising academic excellence.

## YIELD ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction:**

After researching the current recruitment and yield enhancement strategies in place on campus, those that were in place in the past, and those that are present at other institutions, the Task Force has formulated recommendations for re-establishing old programs, modifying current programs, and creating new programs that will increase the yield of accepted students, particularly ALANA and low-income students, to UMass Amherst. To achieve the goal of enhanced yield and an overall more diverse student body, we are recommending the ideas listed below be implemented.

### **Short-Term:**

To be implemented for the current admissions cycle (for evaluation of the class entering in the fall of 2000)

We propose the following sixteen changes to the current yield enhancement efforts for the short-term.

1. Holding off-campus receptions in more accessible, community centered locations
2. Hosting an ALANA Open House in the fall, for prospective students, in addition to the one in the Spring
3. Providing transportation for high school students to visit the campus on a regular basis
4. Providing meal vouchers and/or admission passes to sporting events for ALANA and low-income students visiting the campus
5. Obtaining the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) ALANA mailing list and using it to actively recruit ALANA students
6. Identifying students' interests early and introducing them to Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) and other groups
7. Expanding guidance counselor workshops to invite junior high counselors and providing enhanced materials to guidance counselors
8. Re-establishing and expanding the ALANA Admissions Volunteer Program
9. Creating and filling the position of Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity
10. Developing a diversity web page that is a part of the UMass home page

11. Expanding Auxiliary Services' job placement program
12. Increasing recruitment of underrepresented groups at community colleges in the state
13. Establishing a means of assessing the effectiveness of both old and new yield enhancement strategies including the following: phone-a-thons, off-campus receptions, and both ALANA Open Houses
14. Hiring a full time evaluator
15. Establishing a standing committee on diversity issues pertaining to ALANA recruitment, yield, admissions, and retention
16. Assigning a grant writer to work solely on proposals coming out of the Task Force recommendations

### **1. Off-Campus Receptions:**

In the past, admissions counselors have held off-campus receptions for prospective students in hotels around New England. In addition to these efforts, we recommend that some off-campus receptions, especially those in cities in towns with large ALANA and low-income populations, be held in churches or community centers where some families may feel more comfortable.<sup>6</sup> Further, students of color currently attending UMass should accompany admissions counselors to these receptions, since high school students are often more receptive to people closer to their own age. This practice would save the university money, as community centers and churches are generally free, while hotels are not. The university is currently spending large amounts of money on receptions in hotels that yield very few ALANA or low-income families. Community centered receptions would save money *and* increase the number of ALANA and low-income families learning about UMass.

Included in these receptions should be information for parents concerning high school academics, SAT's, the college application process, etc. Better informed parents will be able to help their children gain access to higher education. Parent information sessions should also be conducted in conjunction with the schools and community groups with which UMass will have partnerships (see long term point #4).

Holding these receptions in a less intimidating atmosphere will increase the attendance rates of ALANA and low-income families. These individuals will, as a result, be more informed about UMass, more interested in attending UMass, and more prepared for the application process.

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<sup>6</sup> See Attachment 6 for a partial list of community centers

## **2. ALANA Open Houses:**

Traditionally, there has been an ALANA Open House held each spring to welcome accepted ALANA students and orient them to the resources on campus for ALANA students. The Task Force agrees with this practice and recommends that it continue, but that an additional ALANA Open House be held in the fall, *before* students apply to UMass. The university should first notify guidance counselors in the state and send posters to each high school to advertise. In order to make this open house accessible to high school students, we recommend that UMass utilize its resource of buses and provide transportation from several locations in the state.

The additional open house in the fall should be open to all students in grades 9-12. This program should also contain two tracks--one for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders and one for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. This way, students could attend twice and have two different experiences, based on their position in their high school career. The first track should focus more on an introduction to UMass and the curricular choices that high school students need to make if they are considering attending UMass. The second track should focus more on the application process and get further in depth on what UMass has to offer.

This way, more ALANA high school students would be aware of what UMass has to offer and therefore apply to the university. This would provide UMass with a larger pool of qualified ALANA applicants. Then, the previously established Open House for those accepted to the university could take place in the spring.

## **3. Transportation:**

One correlation that has been found is that the more a student visits the campus, the more likely they are to want to come to school here. Since UMass is striving for a more diverse student population, we feel it is important to enable as many ALANA and low-income students to visit campus as possible. To make this feasible, UMass should provide busing from strategic locations throughout the state on a regular basis. This transportation program will expose more high school students to the UMass campus therefore creating greater interest in applying to and attending this university.

## **4. Meal Vouchers/Athletic Passes:**

While visiting UMass, it is important that students participate in as much of campus life as possible. However, money constraints often make this difficult for ALANA and low-income students. Therefore, the university should provide these students with vouchers to eat in the Dining Commons and passes to sporting or other events occurring on campus during the visit.

By making students' visits to campus more affordable and enjoyable, the university will be increasing the likelihood that these students will not only apply to the university, but will choose to attend UMass over other schools.

## **5. ALANA Recruitment:**

Some institutions send out mailings to ALANA high school students informing them that they are committed to diversity. We recommend that UMass begin this practice. By using the Student Search Service<sup>7</sup> offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), UMass can gain a mailing list of all the ALANA Massachusetts high school students who took the SAT's from which to send a pamphlet and video highlighting the unique ALANA experience at UMass.

Since incomplete applications sometimes occur, this mailing should also include handy tips on applying to UMass with a reminder that the application must include a transcript, an essay, preferably a letter of recommendation, etc. Letters of recommendation should be encouraged, while understanding that many schools are overburdened and the staff do not have the time to write such letters. Students should also be informed that letters of recommendation do not have to be from a counselor or a teacher, but could come from a coach, a clergy member, or someone else in their life.

This process will encourage ALANA students to apply to UMass, again producing a larger pool of qualified ALANA applicants. It will also promote complete application forms, enabling more students to be considered for admission, while reducing the work of the Admissions Office to track down missing pieces of applications.

## **6. Student Interests:**

One way to encourage students to attend UMass is to make them aware of others on campus with the same interests and hobbies. Prospective students should be surveyed to provide the university with information on their interests. Then, the names of students with an interest in a particular area could be given to the RSO or other group with the same interest. Someone from that group could then call or send out a mailing to those students, informing them that others on campus share their interests and encouraging them to come to UMass and join the RSO or group. Applicants who receive a phone call from other students and are made aware of the fact that others on campus share their interests are more likely to choose to attend UMass.

While the Student Government Association already has a similar system in place, they only come in contact with those students who pass through the student union, not all students visiting the university, and very often ALANA students are not involved in this program. This new practice should increase the yield of all applicants, regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic background.

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<sup>7</sup> See Attachment 7 for an explanation of this service

## **7. Guidance Workshops and Materials:**

Currently, workshops for high school guidance counselors are held on campus. We recommend that these sessions be expanded to invite junior high guidance counselors as well, since many of the curriculum choices affecting a student's college career are made at that point in their education.

We also recommend that these workshops provide counselors with increased information about the UMass admissions process and the resources for students on campus. For example, we recommend that guidance counselors be informed of the importance of letters of recommendation. While these letters are not mandatory, counselors should realize that many applicants are submitting letters and that those applicants without letters therefore look like weaker candidates.

We also recommend that these workshops emphasize the university's commitment to diversity. Guidance counselors at every high school need to be aware of the issues facing ALANA communities and the resources available to ALANA students at UMass in order to advise their ALANA students.

Finally, we recommend that some of these sessions be held off-campus, since many guidance counselors find it hard to miss an entire day of work to travel out to Amherst. If held in a few locations across the state, counselors could miss only half of a day of work and will more likely be able to attend. Also, the written materials that are provided at these sessions should be sent to those counselors who are unable to attend any of these sessions.

## **8. ALANA Admissions Volunteers:**

This program, which was informally run out of the Admissions Office, utilized ALANA student volunteers to recruit more ALANA students to the campus. The volunteers committed as much or as little time as they could spare and helped in several ways including the following: clerical work, Hometown High, ALANA Open House, off-campus receptions, and hosting prospective students. Unfortunately, the program ceased when no one in Admissions had the time or energy to continue it. We are recommending that this program be re-instated using the existing manual that details how to coordinate this program. The maintenance of this program should be included in the job description of the Associate Director for ALANA Admissions. In addition, we recommend that the program be expanded by increasing the number of student volunteers. This should be done by offering academic credit and making the program part of a community service-learning course. Students would gain knowledge and experience while providing a service to ALANA high school students.

This program will increase the number of ALANA applicants to the university, and also contribute to increasing the yield of these students. It will also involve current students of color in the ALANA community, thus contributing to an increase in their retention rates.

#### **9. Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity:**

To ensure the implementation and continued success of the Task Force's yield and retention recommendations, we recommend the creation and filling of a full-time position to oversee ALANA outreach as well as development and implementation of new strategies for increasing campus diversity.

The Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity would report both to the Provost's Office and to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. He/she would also maintain a close working relationship with several offices on campus including, but not limited to, the following: Admissions, Disability Services, Continuing Education, Family Housing, and University Without Walls. This person would also be the chair of the Committee on Diversity (see point #15) and would act as the liaison between the committee and the administration.

Since this person would be in charge of overseeing the recommendations made by the Task Force, members of the Task Force will write the job description for this position. We are also recommending that members of the Task Force are actively involved in the search to fill this position.

#### **10. Diversity Web Page:**

Because so many high school students are now using the Internet to find out about colleges, it is important that the UMass web page reflect the school's commitment both to diversity and to making students feel welcome. Our recommendations here are twofold:

First, that a UMass Diversity web page be constructed and made part of the UMass home page. This page should provide information on the resources available to ALANA students on campus, such as support programs, Special Interest Residential Programs, and RSO's.<sup>8</sup>

Second, that a question and answer page is incorporated as part of the UMass home page. On this page, students or parents could type in a question they have about UMass or the application process. Individuals would be able to check back in 24 hours for their answer. In addition, this page could be divided into specific sections such as Admissions, Housing, Financial Aid, Student Life, ALANA Issues, etc. A full time staff person would be responsible for locating and posting the answers to these questions. But no one person can be expected to be able to answer the wide range of questions that will

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<sup>8</sup> See Attachment 8 for an example of a diversity web page

undoubtedly be submitted. For this reason, this page should be linked to offices around the campus (Bursar's, Housing, Financial Aid, etc.). Questions can be sent to the appropriate office, answered by that office, and the answer posted on the web page.

Having abundant information available on the Internet, including a place for students and parents to get their questions answered, illustrates that UMass is a friendly environment, welcoming to all and committed to diversity. It will also ensure that students are well informed about the campus and the admissions process.

### **11. Job Placement:**

Many ALANA and low-income students are not able to attend UMass because of financial reasons, or come to UMass with financial constraints that make remaining at the university difficult. We are therefore recommending that a job network be set up to provide students with job placements *before* they arrive on campus. While the program cannot guarantee that these students will get a job, it can require that these students be given priority in the hiring process.

Auxiliary Services currently has the "I Need a Job" program, which accomplishes the above goal on a small scale. We are recommending that this program be expanded to include places such as the Campus Center, the Dining Commons, and Housing Services, which employ large numbers of students.

Providing accepted students with employment before they arrive on campus will increase the yield of these students, especially low-income students. Having a job once at UMass will also increase retention rates, since money is a major reason for withdrawal from the university.

### **12. Transfer Recruitment:**

Since transfer students are approximately one fifth of the incoming students each year, and the ALANA percentage for transfers is lower than for freshmen, it is important that more effort be put into recruiting ALANA and low-income students transferring from the community colleges in the state.

Transfer students who have attended community college are more academically mature and better prepared for life at UMass than many students entering college directly from high school. These students are highly motivated and likely to succeed at UMass.

Increased recruitment of qualified community college students will increase the number of non-traditional, low-income, and ALANA transfer applicants to the university.

### **13. Assessment of Programs:**

Currently, there are no strategies in place for the assessment of the many recruitment, yield enhancement, and retention programs being utilized. In order to determine which of these programs should be discontinued and which should be expanded, we recommend that tools for assessment be established. For example, a database could be created which would track applicants from their first inquiry card to their attendance at recruitment events, their application, acceptance, and retention.

This would pave the way for a long-term assessment of recruitment practices, eventually resulting in the ability to concentrate more funds and efforts on those that have the greatest impact on application, yield, and retention

The creation and maintenance of such a database will require the hiring of a full time evaluator (see below).

### **14. Full-Time Evaluator:**

A full time evaluator must be hired to work in either SARIS, OIR, Academic Planning, or Admissions to create and maintain the database that will track all prospective and current students at the university. This person will have the sole responsibility of evaluating the effectiveness of recruitment, yield, and retention programs.

### **15. Committee on Diversity:**

The purpose of such a committee would be to oversee the implementation and continuation of these recommendations as well as developing new recommendations for change. Chaired by the Associate Vice Chancellor of Diversity, this committee should help admissions personnel and interested parties on campus with knowledge that could help coordinate the various efforts made by different groups. Among the responsibilities of the committee should be the following: ongoing development of the UMass Diversity Web Page, working closely with the full time evaluator to assess the effectiveness of particular programs, and maintaining all other ALANA recruitment, yield, admission, and retention programs. The committee should include faculty, administrators, and students.

In addition, this committee should work toward keeping the campus community informed about the issue of diversity at UMass, what new developments are being made, and how they will affect the campus. We suggest that the committee work with the Enrollment Management Working Group in disseminating such information.

## **16. Grant Writer:**

Since many of the recommendations in this document, and particularly those concerning yield enhancement, will cost a great deal of money, we recommend that the university appoint a grant writer whose sole responsibility is to write proposals to secure funding for the recommendations of the Task Force.

### **Long-Term:**

To be implemented for the admissions cycle that evaluates the class entering in the fall of 2001, and beyond.

We propose that these twelve long-term changes be made in addition to the continuation of the previous short-term recommendations.

1. Limiting campus tours to no more than 20 individuals
2. Hiring and training more student admissions representatives and tour guides
3. Re-instating the Hometown High program with the addition of peer mentoring
4. Establishing permanent partnerships between the university and educationally disadvantaged high schools and community groups in the Commonwealth
5. Creating and sending UMass diversity videos to guidance counselors and accepted ALANA students
6. Enhancing materials provided to guidance counselors
7. Hiring an ALANA admissions counselor to work in Transfer Admissions
8. Re-establishing summer programs for ALANA high school students
9. Re-instating Upward Bound or an equivalent program at the Amherst campus
10. Creating a permanent partnership between the university and METCO
11. Providing free connections of Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) bus routes to UMass students
12. Researching and evaluating the offices and programs on campus that address the needs of students with families

### **1. Campus Tours:**

Campus tours are one of the most important aspects of the recruitment process because those students taking tours are more likely to want to attend UMass. For this reason, it is important that each participant in a tour (students and parents alike) is able to hear the information being provided. We are therefore recommending that tours be limited to no more than twenty people each. This will benefit all students considering UMass for college. It should also be noted that campus tours should be non-intrusive and take into account individual departments' need for security.

### **2. Student Admissions Workers:**

In order to decrease the size of groups taking campus tours, more tour guides will be necessary. We are recommending more ALANA tour guides be hired to reflect the diversity of the campus. Another possibility would be that alum, retired faculty, staff, etc be invited to act as tour guides or contacts. More ALANA student admissions representatives would also help portray the diversity of the campus to prospective students. This would encourage more ALANA students to apply to the university. In both cases, more thorough training for these student workers is needed to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the resources for ALANA students on campus. This will again provoke more ALANA students to apply, expanding the pool of ALANA applicants.

### **3. Hometown High/Mentoring:**

The Hometown High program, in which students return to their high school to promote UMass, was a successful way to provide high school students with information about UMass from a source to which they were responsive. We recommend that this program be re-established both in general, and as a part of the ALANA Admissions Volunteer Program.

In addition, we recommend that those students who return to their high schools maintain personal contact with those high school students who express interest in applying to UMass. The UMass students could help the high school students with any questions they may have about UMass, particularly during the application process.

Once high school students from the UMass student's hometown come to UMass, a peer mentor (perhaps the same student) could keep in contact with the new students during the first year.

Having students visit their old high schools will encourage more interest in attending UMass. Contact between high school students and current UMass students will aid the high school students in the application process. Creating a peer-mentoring program

during the first year at UMass will help the university to retain the new students attracted by Hometown High. Once again, this program will also get current UMass students more involved with campus life, increasing their retention rates.

#### **4. School/Community Group Partnerships:**

Many universities around the country are now forming partnerships with educationally disadvantaged high schools. Educationally disadvantaged schools are those schools that do not have adequate resources to provide their students with all of the competitive skills needed to gain entry into most universities. By creating partnerships with these schools, universities can work with the schools to improve the learning conditions for these students while developing an academic pipeline. We recommend that UMass begin forging relationships with disadvantaged schools around Massachusetts.

A list of such schools can be created by looking at factors such as the average income of those attending the school, the racial composition of the school, tax dollars spent per pupil in a school, etc.<sup>9</sup> Enrollment Services is currently compiling a database of all the high schools in the state, which will include many of these demographic facts about each school. This can then be used to determine with which schools UMass should collaborate. We also recommend that UMass create partnerships with community groups in areas where they are present.

#### **5. Diversity Videos:**

Video is one form of technology that is more exciting than written literature, but more readily accessible than web sites. We are recommending two changes be made to the current use of videos in recruiting. First, the current Admissions Office recruitment video that is sent to high schools should be changed to include more direct references to the value of diversity at UMass. Second, an additional video, which focuses more explicitly on the value of diversity and the services on campus for ALANA students (such as the support programs, ethnic studies/certificate programs, and SIRPs) should be created. This new video should then be sent out to all ALANA high school students in Massachusetts who have taken the SAT's to encourage them to apply to and attend UMass.

#### **6. Guidance Materials:**

In addition to a short-term enhancement and update of the materials given to guidance counselors, further steps should be taken to improve the material guidance counselors have for themselves and to share with their students. For example, a video outlining the information given at guidance counselor workshops could be sent to those who were unable to attend.

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<sup>9</sup> See Attachment 9 for a list of possible criteria

In particular, the university should make extra efforts to work with and improve the guidance at the schools with which UMass has partnerships. These disadvantaged schools will undoubtedly lack many of the resources that other schools have and guidance counselors at these schools should be provided with extra materials and training.

Once guidance counselors have abundant information both on how to advise students considering UMass and to share with those students about the university, the number of high school students interested in UMass will increase. With the proper guidance and information, high school students will know what classes to take to prepare them to be successful at this university.

#### **7. ALANA Transfer Counselor:**

In order to increase ALANA transfer recruitment and admissions, a full time ALANA transfer admissions counselor should be hired to focus on recruitment at Massachusetts community colleges. Since the percentage of students of color at community colleges is quite high, a counselor of color should visit these schools and recruit for UMass.

Increased recruiting, and the use of a counselor of color, at community colleges will increase the ALANA transfer applicants from these colleges, thus contributing to the overall diversity of the campus.

#### **8. High School Summer Program:**

High school students need to be exposed to college life and informed about what courses they need to take in high school in order to get into college. Those students who become familiar with the UMass campus and who have positive experiences here will also be more likely to want to attend UMass. For these reasons, we are recommending a summer program for high school students that will be academically challenging, socially exciting, and highly informative.

In the past, UMass has hosted summer programs for high school students, but these have all been ceased due the discontinuation of federal grants and a lack of university funding. Based on the previous enthusiasm for and success of these programs, such as the Science Enrichment Program<sup>10</sup> that ran for six years, we are recommending that a similar summer program be started to introduce Massachusetts high school students to the Amherst campus.

Our proposed program would be loosely modeled after the Science Enrichment Program, but would be for ALANA students with interests in all academic areas. Challenging coursework, social and athletic activities, and information sessions about UMass would

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<sup>10</sup> See Attachment 10 for information on this program

be combined to get these students excited about higher education and UMass Amherst in particular.

We also recommend that the new summer program maintain contact with its students while they finish high school, and encourage them to apply to UMass when the time comes.

### **9. Upward Bound:**

Similar to other summer programs, Upward Bound was a useful tool in introducing high school students to college, including UMass. Currently, Upward Bound is only done for the Boston campus of the UMass system. While the students stay in Amherst over the summer, they are learning about and encouraged to apply to UMass Boston.

We recommend that Upward Bound or an equivalent program be restarted for the Amherst campus. This program will introduce Massachusetts high school students to college and to UMass Amherst, encouraging them to apply to and attend UMass after high school.

### **10. METCO Partnership:**

We recommend that the University forge a relationship with the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) in a fashion similar to its relationship with programs such as the Springfield/University of Massachusetts Minority Achievement project (SUMMA) and Talent Search. As with SUMMA, and with the community colleges in the state, students in METCO would have a contract with the university guaranteeing them admission if they meet BHE criteria. UMass should also work toward expansion of the METCO program in the city of Springfield and the creation of the program in other cities in the state, such as Worcester and Holyoke.

### **11. Free PVRTA Connections:**

One way to increase the yield of low-income and ALANA students is to enable them to live at home and commute to campus. Many of these students live in the neighboring cities of Holyoke and Springfield and since many students do not have cars, buses to these cities are needed.

We recommend that UMass students be able to connect from the PVRTA routes in Springfield and Holyoke to the routes in the Amherst area for free. By showing a student identification card or a bus pass, these students would be able to get from their homes to campus for free. This would entail that the university expand its current agreement with PVRTA and should be coordinated through Commuter Services and/or UMass Transit.

This easier access to campus would enable more students, particularly low-income students, to live at home and commute to school at no cost.

## **12. Students with Families**

There are currently some offices and organizations on campus that attempt to address the needs of students with families, such as housing and childcare. We recommend that these offices and programs be examined in the future to determine what changes can be made to further fulfill the needs of students with families.

### **Conclusion:**

These recommendations are focused on increasing the yield of all applicants to UMass, but in particular those who are low-income and ALANA. The University's effort to reflect the diverse population of Massachusetts's high schools can only succeed if ALANA students want to attend UMass. Both the short and long-term strategies recommended here will increase student interest in UMass, provide students with more knowledge, and make students of all backgrounds feel welcome at the university.

## RETENTION RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction:**

Careful research into retention programs at this university and other institutions has resulted in the Task Force's arrival at several recommendations aimed at increasing the retention rates of all students, but with a specific focus on those students with traditionally low retention rates (low-income and ALANA students). We are recommending both the expansion of current retention efforts and the implementation of new practices.

### **Short-Term:**

To be implemented for the upcoming admissions cycle (for evaluation of the class entering in the fall of 2000)

We propose that the following four short-term changes be made immediately.

1. Improving the outreach to and contact with pre-freshmen
2. Expanding current ALANA support programs
3. Identifying students having academic trouble and providing support and tutoring
4. Monitoring the success of on-campus tutorial services

### **1. Pre-Freshman Outreach and Contact:**

The university needs to better prepare accepted students for life at UMass. To achieve this goal, we recommend that the university do the following three things:

- Send accepted students the academic catalog *before* they arrive on campus for orientation. Since many high school students are ill informed about college academics and orientation can be a very stressful time, many students are rushed into their academic choices for their first semester. This, in turn, can cause frustration and discontent during the first semester and result in students dropping out of the university. Providing students with academic catalogs ahead of time will better prepare students for orientation and their first year on campus. This will reduce the stress and frustration that cause many to withdraw from the university.

- Provide one on one faculty advising for all students during orientation. Currently, only honors students receive this type of advising, but we believe that it would be beneficial for all students. If limited faculty are available, graduate TA's could be hired to advise incoming freshmen. One on one contact with a faculty member or graduate student will allow pre-freshmen to get more individual attention and ask more questions about their major, coursework, and academic life at UMass in general.
- Explore the option of providing accepted students with advising, counseling, and early entry into coursework either on campus or through the use of distance learning technology. Students could then better prepare themselves for life at UMass before formally enrolling in the fall.

## **2. Support Programs:**

There are already several support programs in place at the university for students of color. These programs provide ALANA students with academic advice, tutoring, and a sense of community. After consultation with students and staff affiliated with these programs, the Task Force became aware that these programs are under-funded and under-staffed. We recommend that the following support programs receive increased funding and that their full time staff positions are permanently filled. These programs are:

Bilingual Collegiate Program (BCP)  
 Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black and other Minority Students (CCEBMS)  
 Native American Student Support Services (NASSS)  
 United Asia Learning Resource Center (UALRC)

In addition, these programs should remain their own entities and not be combined under the umbrella of the Learning Resource Center. These support programs provide not only academic support, but also social and emotional support to ALANA students on this campus. Each needs to have its own unique environment.

Increasing the funding for these programs and ensuring that they are each fully staffed will increase the amount of support students of color on this campus receive, which we believe will have a positive affect on the retention rates of these students.

## **3. Identifying Students in Trouble:**

Better mechanisms need to be developed for early identification of students in academic trouble. While there are already programs in place through the various ALANA support programs, faculty need to be strongly encouraged to participate by providing the support programs with lists of students in academic jeopardy. In general, there needs to be better coordination between the support programs, the faculty, and the academic deans. Early

intervention will aid in keeping students on the right academic track, which will increase their retention.

#### **4. Tutorial Services:**

The tutorial services currently in place at UMass need to be assessed for effectiveness. To do this, students who are using these programs should be surveyed on their satisfaction with the services, and their academic progress should be monitored over time.

This will allow the university to concentrate on improving those tutoring programs that are less effective than others.

#### **Long-Term:**

To be implemented for the admissions cycle that evaluates the class entering in the fall of 2001, and beyond.

We propose nine long-term changes to current retention strategies.

1. Developing and implementing a pre-semester program for students with fewer academic skills
2. Increasing financial aid for all students
3. Establishing private scholarships for ALANA students
4. Developing and implementing an academic summer program for undergraduates
5. Hiring more faculty of color / re-instating the Special Opportunity Hiring Program or a similar departmental incentive program
6. Increasing recruitment of ALANA graduate students
7. Expanding ethnic studies curriculum, such as Asian American, Latino, and Native American studies
8. Reserving Special Interest Residential Programs (SIRPs) for respective ALANA groups and allies, and forming a committee to hear SIRP concerns
9. Creating an ALANA Resource Center on campus

### **1. Pre-Semester Programs:**

Students with fewer academic skills who are admitted to the university often have a difficult time adjusting to campus life. To remedy this, we recommend developing a program in which these students are brought to campus one week earlier than other students to facilitate this transition. In addition to study skills, time management, and other seminars that will prepare them for college life, these students will have the chance to meet with faculty and interact socially with others on campus. This will reduce anxiety in the first semester and in turn increase retention rates among these students.

### **2. Financial Aid:**

Due to the fact that lack of funding is one main reason that many students withdraw from the university, we are recommending that financial aid for all undergraduates be increased.

This will benefit *all* students at the University, enabling them to afford an education and increasing their retention rates.

### **3. ALANA Scholarships:**

Because funding is often a particularly important factor in determining whether ALANA students can remain at UMass, we recommend that the university work toward identifying private organizations that will establish scholarships expressly for students of color. Other universities have done so through their Alumni Associations. Another option may be the Massachusetts Teacher's Association. In addition, we recommend that the university increase efforts to direct ALANA students toward outside funding sources and to continue to use race as one of many factors in awarding existing university scholarships.

These scholarships are intended to serve those students who may not be able to or choose to attend UMass otherwise. This will persuade highly qualified ALANA applicants to attend UMass and will enable low-income ALANA students to remain at the university and contribute to the overall diversity of the campus.

### **4. Undergraduate Summer Program:**

Students at UMass need to feel connected with faculty and confident in their academic pursuits. This is particularly necessary for the retention of ALANA students. To ensure this, we are recommending a summer program for ALANA undergraduates similar to that already recommended for high school students. Undergraduates would stay on campus

during the summer to engage in research and collaboration with faculty in their areas of interest.<sup>11</sup>

This would enable students to become more academically involved and to establish relationships with faculty. Students would then be more inclined to remain at the university and even continue on to graduate school. This, in turn, will promote the retention of future ALANA undergraduates, since ALANA graduate students serve as positive role models for undergraduates.

## **5. Faculty of Color:**

Hiring faculty of color should be a campus priority. One factor affecting ALANA student retention is the lack of role models for these students. Increasing the number of faculty of color on this campus will have a positive impact on ALANA retention rates. We recommend increasing the number of faculty of color by immediately re-instating the Special Opportunity Hiring Program, and developing an effective departmental incentive program to increase the faculty of color on campus. Further, all departmental hiring needs to emphasize the importance of diversity.

## **6. ALANA Graduate Students:**

Graduate students are also very often role models for undergraduates. Since graduate students are very visible while either teaching their own classes or assisting professors who teach classes, it is important that the graduate student body is diverse.

Increased recruiting and admittance of ALANA graduate students in all departments will provide UMass undergraduates with more ALANA role models. This will in turn increase the retention of ALANA undergraduates.

## **7. Ethnic Studies:**

ALANA retention rates will be enhanced if more classes related to cultural diversity are offered. We recommend that more classes in the areas of Asian American, Latino, and Native American studies be taught by qualified faculty members.

In addition, having this curriculum on campus benefits *all* students, of whatever race, who desire to expand their knowledge of different ethnic groups. Courses in these departments should be classified as "diversity" general education requirements, to encourage students of all backgrounds to take them. This would create UMass graduates who are highly prepared for the working world, since the more a student knows about the world and those in it, the better prepared they are for their future. We also recommend

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<sup>11</sup> See Attachment 11 for an example of a similar program

that the faculty senate, via its normal committees, research the possible need for and viability of establishing these areas as full departments on this campus.

## **8. SIRP Residents:**

Where a student lives on campus plays a large role in their retention at the university. This is one reason Special Interest Residential Programs were created. SIRPs are intended for students of particular racial backgrounds and their allies. However, because the university often finds itself overcrowded, non-ALANA students who do not identify themselves as allies are often assigned to live on these floors, often without their prior knowledge. This causes tension between residents, making it an uncomfortable place to live and defeating the purpose of the SIRPs.

For this reason, we recommend that a policy be created and enforced that does not allow the placement of students on SIRPs who are not of the designated background or allies.

There should also be a committee in Housing Services that will meet with and hear the concerns of SIRP residents, which often go unheard.

These new practices will restore SIRPs to their original intention—as safe and comfortable places for ALANA students to live. This will decrease negative experiences of ALANA students and therefore increase their retention rates.

## **9. Resource Center:**

An ALANA resource center should be created to provide students on this campus with access to books, videos, and other media concerning ALANA issues. Currently, the UMass library lacks many resources that would be useful for students of color and others interested in learning about particular cultures. The space should be a comfortable, friendly atmosphere in which students feel welcome to sit and look over materials.<sup>12</sup>

Having these resources together in one location will benefit all students on campus with an interest learning about the art, history, literature, and other aspects of diverse cultures.

The creation of this resource center should include the hiring of a director to oversee and maintain the center and to aid students in finding materials that interest them.

## **Conclusion:**

These recommendations will increase the retention rates of students at UMass, particularly low-income and ALANA students, who traditionally have lower retention rates than others. UMass

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<sup>12</sup> See Attachment 12 for details on this center

has the responsibility to make students feel welcome and to help students through difficult periods in their lives, both personally and academically. Our recommendations make this possible. With the recommended efforts in place, UMass will be able to not only admit a diverse student body, but also to retain and graduate one.