April 13, 2022

Dear Students,

A new academic calendar will be in place next year at UMass Amherst, creating a six-week Winter Session, a later end-date for the Spring Semester, and Commencement 2023 scheduled for Memorial Day Weekend. This revision was adopted to benefit students academically in a variety of ways, and we encourage you to make note of these revisions as you plan ahead for the coming year.

The change, considered in collaboration with the campus administration, was studied and adopted by the Faculty Senate, which has primary responsibility for academic matters. The Senate, drawing on data and input from students and other members of the campus community, concluded that the new, longer Winter Session will enable students to take for-credit courses outside of the traditional Fall and Spring semesters – providing increased learning opportunities, decreased time to graduation and lighter Fall/Spring semester loads.

Specifically, the academic benefits of the new Winter Session include:

- A six-week term is more conducive to student learning and more pedagogically sound. Students who have taken Winter Session classes have expressed an overwhelming desire for a six-week winter session indicating the formal 3 ½ week session was way too condensed and even the five-week session was not preferred. Six weeks allows students to learn the material and progress through the class in a more preferred manner.

- Six weeks is also consistent with the Summer Session I and Summer Session II schedules allowing students to experience a consistent course delivery and learning approach whether taking a class during Winter Session or one of the Summer Sessions.

- Feedback from undergraduate associate deans and advisors recommend a six-week winter session as more appropriate for students repeating courses because of prior failure or a poor grade in the course. The previous 3 ½ week winter session was very challenging for students who were trying to stay on track towards graduating while repeating a course.

- A six-week winter session allows students to manage additional academic workloads creating the opportunity to graduate early and/or pursue additional credentials such as a dual degree, secondary major, minors, certificates or even begin an accelerated master's program.

As you begin planning for academic year 2022-23, please take into account these revisions, and I encourage you to explore the many opportunities provided by an expanded Winter Session.